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Journal of European Baptist Studies

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Contents

Editorial

4

Dr Parush R Parushev

**Christ comes to the heart: Moravian influence
on the shaping of evangelical spirituality**

5 – 23

Dr Ian M Randall

A Model for Introducing Christian Ethics

24 – 40

Dr Larry Maddox

**A Comparative Mapping of Baptist Moral
Concerns and Identity in Six Regions of
Europe and Central Asia**

41 – 60

Drs Rollin G Grams and Parush R Parushev

Editorial

The vision of the founders of this periodical is that it will attract contributions from a variety of backgrounds and yet with the conviction that there is a distinct baptistic perspective of engaging matters theological. It is also the resolve of the editorial board to create and sustain an academic culture around the seminary, drawing on the resources of the Free Church tradition and passing them on to church-based and academic theologians. Essays in this issue are representative of research activities carried out by the academic community of IBTS.

Ian Randall continues mapping the origins and identity of the baptistic movements in Central and Eastern Europe. The work is part of an ongoing research project. In a sequel to his highly acclaimed book *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* (2005), Randall traces the spiritual roots of the evangelical movements in Europe and North America back to the renewed Unity of the Brethren (Moravian) community. He investigates the main features of spirituality within the renewed Moravian community and reflects on their influence on British Baptist life.

As a founding member of the Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools (CEBTS), IBTS offers assistance to sister institutions of the consortium and to recently formed evangelical Bible schools and seminaries in Eastern Europe. Larry Maddox's work offers a methodological approach to the discipline of Christian Ethics based on his experience of teaching a number of undergraduate courses at these emerging institutions in eastern Europe. The paper is also an example of the fruitful discussions over the years on methods in ethics at IBTS Postgraduate Seminars and Research Conferences.

The last paper is an academic engagement with findings of another research project carried out by an IBTS academic team. The project is coordinated by Rollin Grams and surveys the context of baptistic communities in six regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The first results are to be published in the IBTS Research publication series in 2006. The paper attempts a comparative analysis of the findings of the survey relating to moral concerns of Baptists in the regions.

The Revd Dr Parush R Parushev
Academic Dean, IBTS

Christ comes to the heart: Moravian influence on the shaping of evangelical spirituality

The world-wide evangelical movement was shaped in the eighteenth century by European Continental Pietism, in the Evangelical Revival in Britain and in the Great Awakening in America. The impact on British Protestantism of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival, sometimes known as the Methodist Revival, led principally in England by two Church of England clergymen, John Wesley (1703-91) and George Whitefield (1714-70), has been thoroughly analysed by the eminent historian David Bebbington. He describes in his seminal work, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, how the decade beginning in 1734 ‘witnessed in the English-speaking world a more important development than any other, before or after, in the history of Protestant Christianity: the emergence of the movement that became Evangelicalism’.¹ This movement had strong links with earlier English Puritanism. Bebbington argues, however, that the Puritans tended to take the view that assurance of personal salvation was the fruit of spiritual struggle, whereas the evangelicals, by contrast, ‘believed it to be general, normally given at conversion and the result of simple acceptance of the gift of God’.² Not all the Puritans took this view of assurance, but eighteenth-century evangelicalism undoubtedly brought new spiritual emphases. John Wesley, it can be argued, was an Enlightenment thinker who drew from the philosopher John Locke the idea that understanding was the fruit of experience.³

The transnational nature of the evangelical movement has been increasingly recognised. ‘I look upon all the world’, John Wesley famously stated, ‘as my parish.’⁴ In this Wesley drew from the thinking of a gifted German nobleman, Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60), who was the creative leader of the Renewed Unity of the Brethren (more commonly known now as the Moravians or the Moravian Church) and who wrote in 1738 about the task of going out ‘to all the peoples of the world’.⁵ The writings of Jonathan Edwards, America’s most notable theologian,⁶ helped to spread carefully enunciated evangelical views in the eighteenth century

¹ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴ J. Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, Vol. I (London: Epworth Press, 1931, reprinted 1960), p. 286.

⁵ J.C.S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760-1800* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), p. 6.

⁶ R.W. Jenson, *America’s Theologian: A recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: OUP, 1992).

and beyond.⁷ In the twentieth century the international growth of evangelicalism continued. There has also been a significant re-shaping of aspects of evangelical experience in the period since the early twentieth century, due to the massive influence on evangelical life world-wide of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, with their emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit and also the gifts of the Spirit – such as prophecy, speaking in tongues and healing. The international Pentecostal community, to a large extent a sub-set of evangelicalism, has seen phenomenal numerical growth since its beginnings about one hundred years ago.⁸

Studies of evangelicalism over the past few years have generally aligned themselves with the argument advanced by David Bebbington that evangelicalism is a movement comprising all those who stress conversion, the Bible, the cross, and activism.⁹ I will follow this approach. In my analysis I am also using an analytical framework proposed by Philip Sheldrake in *Spirituality and History* (1991), in which spirituality is seen as concerned with the conjunction of theology, communion with God and practical Christianity.¹⁰ Essentially, my position is that evangelicalism is a distinctive stream of Christian spirituality, since Bebbington's four aspects are not doctrinal formulations but have to do with 'lived experience'. Indeed Bebbington emphasises the crucial nature for evangelical identity of 'assurance' – which is clearly experiential.¹¹ The heart of evangelical spirituality is a personal relationship with Christ.¹² What has been somewhat neglected in a number of studies of evangelical spirituality from an Anglo-American perspective has been the contribution made to this stream of spirituality by movements in central Europe. In this article I want to examine the effect of the thinking of Zinzendorf (who came from Dresden in Germany) and of wider Moravian thinking and practice on evangelical beginnings, and also to see how aspects of Moravian spirituality influenced Baptist life.

Conversion: the 'one object'

John Wesley, who shaped much early evangelical thinking in the English-speaking world, recorded in his diary for 24 May 1738 the following

⁷ M. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Leicester: Apollos, 2003); D.W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005).

⁸ See, for example, Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven* (London: Cassell, 1996) and W.J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Development Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997).

⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 2-17.

¹⁰ P. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History* (London: SPCK, 1991), p. 52.

¹¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 74.

¹² I have developed this in my *What a Friend we have in Jesus* (London: DLT, 2005).

words, which were to become among the most famous in the story of Christian experience:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street [in the city of London], where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death... I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart.¹³

This account, describing as it does how John Wesley came to a point of personal reliance on God's grace and Christ's work on the cross for salvation, later came to be seen as a description of a typical experience of evangelical conversion, although there has been considerable discussion as to whether it should rather be seen as an expression of assurance of salvation.¹⁴ Wesley had previously, when challenged by a question from the Moravian Bishop, August Spanenberg (Professor at Jena University in Germany), 'Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?', found himself unprepared to give a definite answer.¹⁵

There were a number of prior spiritual influences on John Wesley and on his brother Charles, who was also an Anglican clergyman. The seventeenth-century English Puritan movement, mediated through the Wesley family, was one. Catholic devotion, which set out rigorous demands to be met by those taking up the spiritual life, was another. In 1726 John Wesley read the *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, which directed him to 'the religion of the heart'. He was also affected by the writings of the Anglican high churchman, William Law, *On Christian Perfection* (1726) and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, (1728), which helped to create within him deeper spiritual longings. Wesley corresponded with Law. The Wesleys and Whitefield were part of the 'Holy Club' of serious Christians in Oxford – which is where the name 'Methodists' came from – before they had any contact with the Moravians. There was, too, the (somewhat ambiguous) influence on John Wesley of the more mystical streams of spirituality, notably that expressed by German

¹³ W.R. Ward and R.P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 18 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), pp. 249-50.

¹⁴ For a full discussion of the meaning of John Wesley's experience see H.D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), pp. 144-57.

¹⁵ H. McGonigle, *John Wesley and the Moravians* (Ilkeston: Moorleys/ Wesley Fellowship, 1993), pp. 6-7.

mystics such as Meister Eckhardt, Johann Tauler and Jakob Böhme, or in books like *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, by Henry Scougal of Aberdeen, a Scottish Episcopalian.¹⁶ All these different influences contributed in some way to John Wesley's Aldersgate Street experience.

Colin Podmore, however, in his book on the Moravians in England, argues that the story of the English Evangelical Revival begins not in Aldersgate Street but in Central Europe.¹⁷ Here a movement of spiritual renewal was influential in forging the evangelical concept of conversion. In 1722 Zinzendorf, a 22-year-old Count who had been educated in a German Pietist environment at Halle, opened his estate in south-east Saxony to a group of Protestant refugees from Bohemia and Moravia.¹⁸ Members of this group, who were escaping from persecution by the Roman Catholic Habsburgs, were part of the Unity of the Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*) or the Moravians, a movement that had its origins in the reformation in Bohemia under Jan Hus, who was put to death in 1415.¹⁹ The Moravian community that was established with Zinzendorf's help, called Herrnhut ('under the Lord's Protection'), became the scene in 1727 of a profound spiritual renewal, by which time the community numbered at least 220 people. Four girls in the community, who had been struggling with doubts about their salvation, came to a powerful spiritual assurance. The intensity of these experiences spread to the whole community. Podmore describes this as a quasi-pentecostal experience.²⁰ Zinzendorf taught a conscious conversion, suggesting that 'Our Saviour...will do all by His Spirit...when He comes and approaches the Heart with His Power'.²¹ Christ 'coming to the heart' expressed the essence of the spiritual experience.

John and Charles Wesley first met the Moravians when they travelled from England to Georgia, in America, in 1735, hoping at that time to exercise a ministry there. The Moravians had established missionary work in Georgia a year before and there were twenty-six Moravians on the ship with the Wesleys. Characteristically, John Wesley, always a keen investigator (evidence of his empiricist, Enlightenment approach), began

¹⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 37-8. See also A. S. Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley: Evangelist* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), chapter 3.

¹⁷ C. Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 5; cf. W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), chapters 2 and 4.

¹⁸ For Zinzendorf see A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf: The Ecumenical Pioneer* (London: SCM, 1962).

¹⁹ See I. Noble, 'Jan Hus in Ecumenical Discussion', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2006), pp. 5-19.

²⁰ Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England*, p. 6.

²¹ Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses on Jesus Christ our Lord* (1750), cited in G. Stead, 'Moravian Spirituality and its Propagation in West Yorkshire during the Eighteenth-Century Evangelical Revival', *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (1999), p. 235; cf. P. Toon, *Born Again: A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 154-5.

learning German so that he could speak to his fellow-travellers. One incident on the voyage which is often related was when a violent storm started and most of the English passengers began to scream out in fear. The Moravians, it seems, calmly sang hymns together. John Wesley, profoundly impressed by this illustration of spiritual resilience under pressure, wrote about the event in his diary as something glorious.²² John Wesley met and had talks with the Moravian leader, August Spanenberg, who acted as assistant to Zinzendorf, and in one notable conversation Spanenberg asked Wesley: 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' It was a strange question to ask a Church of England priest. Wesley replied with some hesitation: 'I know he is the Saviour of the World'. True, said Spanenberg, but then he insisted 'do you know he has saved you?' After further questioning, Wesley said that he did know, but he commented in his diary: 'I fear they were vain words'.²³ It was this focus on the issue of assurance which was to be an evangelical distinctive.

When Wesley returned from Georgia in 1738, feeling that his efforts to be effective as a missionary had failed, he was ready to embrace the Moravian message of assurance of salvation. It was this that helped to ignite the Methodist Revival. As he reflected in early 1738 on his own lack of inner peace, John Wesley met and was impressed by three Moravians, 'all of whom testified of their own personal experience, that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present sins'. Later Wesley would differ from the Moravians on this issue: although at the time he was seeking 'the full power of faith' which he saw in some of these 'living witnesses', he would subsequently take the view that there were degrees of faith. But at that point he was seeking desperately for personal assurance. He was asking the question 'who shall convert me?', and in distress cried out: 'Lord, help Thou my unbelief'.²⁴ It was at a Moravian-led meeting in Aldersgate Street in 1738 that John Wesley finally received assurance, and his own account of this event (above) uses typical Moravian language. Later on that momentous evening John celebrated his experience in his brother Charles' room, as with others they sang a hymn written by Charles – one of the thousands of hymns that he would write.²⁵ Both John and Charles had been influenced by a young Moravian, Peter Böhler, who had spoken insistently of the possibility and the reality of 'instantaneous conversion'. The evangelical conversion of the warm-hearted and impulsive Charles pre-

²² N. Curnock, ed., *The Journal of John Wesley, AM* (London: Epworth Press, 1938), Vol. I, p. 143.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

²⁴ McGonigle, *John Wesley and the Moravians*, pp. 8-9, 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

dated that of John by a few days.²⁶ The shaping of Methodism and the wider evangelical movement owed a great deal to Moravian experience.

Moravian and Methodist conversionism spread steadily, and had an increasing effect on both Particular and General Baptist life in England in the eighteenth century. Dan Taylor, who formed the New Connexion of General Baptists, was one influential product of the Evangelical Revival, as was the Cambridge Baptist minister, Robert Robinson, converted under George Whitefield in 1752. Robinson had attended the Tabernacle (where Whitefield preached), ‘pitying the poor deluded Methodists, but came away envying their happiness’. This experience led to Robinson’s conversion and to a fruitful ministry.²⁷ Mark Noll describes how ‘a direct bestowal of energy from Moravianism and the converts of Whitefield’, together with stimulus from America and from the Methodists, contributed to Baptist and other Nonconformists entering ‘a period of dynamic evangelical expansion’.²⁸ There was controversy over some of the features of Moravian spirituality, as we will see, but notable Baptist ministers of the later eighteenth century, such as Samuel Pearce, a fervent advocate of mission, were inspired by examples of Moravian commitment to the conversion of those who did not know Jesus Christ.²⁹ John Rippon (1751-1836), the leading London Baptist minister for a generation or more and a respected figure within wider Calvinistic Baptist circles, corresponded with the Moravian leader, Christian Latrobe. Rippon included in his *Baptist Annual Register*, letters which described Moravian work in several countries in Europe and elsewhere.³⁰ C.H. Spurgeon (1834-92), the best-known Baptist of the nineteenth century, was enthusiastic about the Moravians, publishing articles by his brother, James Archer Spurgeon, which vividly recounted their story. J.A. Spurgeon stressed that ‘the conversion of souls’ was the ‘one object’ always in view in the Herrnhut community.³¹

The Bible: ‘to know His word’

For the early eighteenth-century evangelicals, personal experience of Christ, which was of paramount importance, was nourished by Bible

²⁶ F.C. Gill, *Charles Wesley: The First Methodist* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), pp. 65-71; cf. M.R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 402-3.

²⁷ See R. Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986), chapters 6 and 7.

²⁸ Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, p. 194.

²⁹ S. Pearce Carey, *Samuel Pearce: The Baptist Brainerd* (London: The Carey Press, n.d.), p. 160.

³⁰ K.R. Manley, ‘Redeeming Love Proclaim’: *John Rippon and the Baptists* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), pp. 178-9.

³¹ J.A. Spurgeon, ‘Moravian Brethren’, *The Sword and the Trowel*, May 1867, p. 217.

reading, and so evangelical leaders constantly encouraged people to read the scriptures.³² John Wesley often referred to himself as a '*homo unius libri*', a man of one book. In the preface to his sermons, where he used this phrase, he spoke of the way of salvation as being 'written down in a book', and he continued: 'O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me.'³³ This high view of biblical inspiration was not an unusual perspective among Protestants in that period, although Wesley and other evangelicals held it with particularly strong conviction and also believed in the power of the Bible's message to change lives. The Bible has been prominent in evangelicalism as the authority to which all other authorities, including experience, must submit.³⁴ The stress on the practical application of Bible teaching was a feature of the original Unity of the Brethren in Bohemia and Moravia, and was set out in the movement's catechism, which dated from 1522. 'What is faith in the Lord God?' was one question. The answer was: 'It is to know God, to know His word; above all to love Him, to do His commandments, and to submit to His will.' Similarly, the answer to the question 'What is faith in Christ?' was: 'It is to listen to His word, to know Him, to honour Him, to love Him and to join the company of His followers.' Particular emphasis was placed on the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.³⁵

The need for a practical living out of the teaching of the Bible continued to mark the Brethren, whose last Bishop was the educationalist J.A. Comenius, and this emphasis was taken into the life of the Renewed Unity of the Brethren from the 1720s. As well as knowing the Bible personally, the Moravians encouraged people to come together in small groups to study and apply the Bible. This move owed much to German Lutheran Pietism. In the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century there was a concern to increase lay participation in Lutheran life. Stemming from a desire to achieve this goal and in particular to improve the level of spirituality in the German Lutheranism with which he was familiar, Philipp Spener proposed *collegia pietatis*, or devotional meetings, in which believers would meet to teach each other. Spener's book, *Pia desideria*, published in 1675, which dealt with what he called 'Earnest desires for a reform of the true evangelical Church', had great influence across parts of

³² Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, p. 141.

³³ A.C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1, Sermons, I (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), p. 105; cf. Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley: Evangelist*, p. 211.

³⁴ D.K. Gillett, *Trust and Obey: Explorations in Evangelical Spirituality* (London: DLT, 1993), pp. 131, 133.

³⁵ J.E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (London: Moravian Publication Office, 1909), pp. 81-2.

Europe. Spener included as one of his six major ideas for the renewal of the churches the ‘earnest and thorough study of the Bible in private meetings’. These Bible study cells also engaged in singing hymns and in sharing Christian testimonies.³⁶ The communal method of prayer and study represented a significant shift away from the pulpit-centred way in which a good deal of Protestantism had been operating up to that point. Although the slogan *sola scriptura* was widely used during the Reformation period, it was Pietism that developed Bible study groups which emphasised the right of the people to interpret scripture.³⁷ Spirituality that took the Bible seriously was nurtured communally as well as individually.

Zinzendorf, who was a creative if somewhat eccentric thinker, drew from these ideas as well as from the traditions of the Unity of the Brethren. Spener was Zinzendorf’s godfather and Zinzendorf was brought up with the influence of August Francke, another leading Pietist in Halle. Although Zinzendorf was to question aspects of Pietism, small societies for mutual spiritual edification were to be central to Moravian spirituality. Zinzendorf acknowledged that some elements of the way in which he organised his cells, such as arranging the small groups by age and gender, had no basis in the New Testament, but at the same time he insisted that the core principles by which the community lived were ‘apostolic’ – patterned after the early church as set out in the New Testament. The details were a response to needs and circumstances.³⁸ Christian David, a carpenter who was one of the refugees from Moravia who became a leader in the Herrnhut community, spoke of the small ‘bands’ as contributing to making a community that was *proper Evangelio*, ‘appropriate to the gospel’.³⁹ The concept of small groups, although not all the organisational detail, was exported from Herrnhut to Britain and elsewhere.⁴⁰ John Wesley’s Methodist societies – which met in class meetings and smaller bands each week – drew from the model of spirituality expressed by the Moravians. Wesley saw his societies as standing firm ‘in the good old Bible way’ and on one occasion told a group in Derbyshire to ‘go straight forward, knowing nothing of various opinions, and minding nothing but to be Bible Christians’.⁴¹ It has been argued by Eamonn Duffy that Wesley abandoned the ideal of the

³⁶ Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, p. 57.

³⁷ See J.N. Strom, ‘Problems and Promises of Pietism Research’, *Church History*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (2002), pp. 536-54.

³⁸ A. Freeman, ‘*Gemeine*: Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf’s Understanding of the Church’, *Brethren Life and Thought*, Vol. 47, Nos. 1 and 2 (2002), p. 15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ G. and M. Stead, *The Exotic Plant* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2003), chapters 2 and 3.

⁴¹ N. Curnock, ed., *Journal of John Wesley*, Vol. 6, p. 100, cited by Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley: Evangelist*, p. 192.

‘primitive’ Christianity of the early church in favour of ‘real’ Christianity, but in fact what Wesley considered he saw in the Moravians – certainly when he visited Herrnhut following his Aldersgate Street experience – was the reality of life as lived in the early church.⁴²

A third aspect of the use of the Bible which has been distinctive of evangelicalism has been the role of preaching. Podmore argues that preaching was far from central in Moravian worship, and seeks to establish this by reference to the absence of a pulpit in their meeting hall. However, this is to underestimate the variety of ways in which the Bible was used in the worship of the community. As Podmore himself notes, in the Bible hours at Herrnhut and elsewhere the Bible was read, and the official ‘Preaching’ part of the liturgy involved a sermon, to which can be added the ‘quarter-hours’ when brief, heart-felt homilies were given.⁴³ It is also significant that manuscript copies of large numbers of sermons were circulated from Herrnhut to the widely-scattered Moravian groups.⁴⁴ What the Moravian community managed to avoid, at least in the early period, was the biblical teaching being restricted to one minister. Christian David, after hearing a sermon by Johann Andreas Rothe, the Lutheran pastor of Berthelsdorf (where Zinzendorf lived), affirmed Rothe’s view that one or two preachers could not serve the needs of the whole community, and so in 1725 seven men and seven women who were seen to be appropriately gifted were appointed as ‘Helpers’ – a term which for the Moravians was equivalent to Pastor.⁴⁵

The reading, study and preaching of the Bible have been characteristics of evangelical spirituality since the eighteenth century. These ingredients have also been linked with singing and with prayer. Noll states: ‘For the early generations [of evangelicals], hymn-singing was almost sacramental’.⁴⁶ Here again the Moravian influence was crucial. A visitor to a Moravian service in Fulneck, Yorkshire, confessed that the singing ‘made a deeper impression upon his Heart than the Preaching’.⁴⁷ The first Moravian hymnbooks included sixteenth and seventeenth century hymns from the Unity of the Brethren and also hymns composed by contemporary authors such as Zinzendorf. John Wesley translated some of these into English. Many of these hymns drew from biblical themes,

⁴² E. Duffy, ‘Primitive Christianity revived’, *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 14 (1977), pp. 287-300; cf. C.J. Podmore, ‘The Anglicans and the Brethren: Anglican Attitudes to the Moravians in the Mid-Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (1990), p. 627.

⁴³ Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England*, pp. 147-8.

⁴⁴ Stead, ‘Moravian Spirituality and its Propagation’, p. 243.

⁴⁵ Freeman, ‘*Gemeine*: Count Nicholas von Zindendorf’s Understanding of the Church’, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁶ Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, p. 260.

⁴⁷ Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England*, p. 149.

outlining salvation in Christ and expressing thankfulness for the present enjoyment of salvation and dedication to Christ's will. The following verse is typical:⁴⁸

O ground us deeper still in thee
And let us thy disciples be!
And when we witness here below
Let thy pure joy our hearts o'erflow.

Praise and prayer became typical of Methodism. John Wesley's *Journal* for 1 January 1739 records that he was with about sixty friends, including his brother Charles, George Whitefield, and other prominent Methodist leaders, for a 'love feast' in Fetter Lane, London (something drawn from the Moravians), and that 'the Power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.'⁴⁹

All of these elements of spirituality helped to reshape Baptist life. John Rippon, in an address delivered in 1803, spoke of the progress of evangelical faith, noting advance in the Church of England and among the Dissenters and the Methodists, but reserved his most effusive words for 'these eminent *Missionaries*, the MORAVIANS', whose ministry was designed 'to humanize and christianise the world'.⁵⁰ This reflected the deep impression which Moravians had made on Rippon. In addition, Rippon was inspired, as the Moravians had been, by new spiritual possibilities through hymnody. The period 1760 to 1800 saw a flowering of Baptist hymn-writing. Rippon included in his hugely successful hymnbook, *Selection of Hymns* (produced in 1787), hymns written by Baptists such as Anne Steele, Benjamin Beddome, Samuel Stennett, Robert Robinson, Samuel Medley, John Fawcett and Benjamin Francis. There were also hymns by Congregationalists, Anglicans, Methodists and Moravians. Rippon believed both in 'variety in the work of praise' and also in solid theology.⁵¹ In a sermon he preached at the death of his friend and fellow Baptist minister, Andrew Gifford, Rippon outlined the gospel of grace, praised and

⁴⁸ Stead, 'Moravian Spirituality and its Propagation', pp. 253, 5.

⁴⁹ W.R. Ward and R.P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 19: Journals and Diaries, II (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 29.

⁵⁰ J. Rippon, *A Discourse delivered at the Drum Head*, pp. 37-8, cited by Manley, 'Redeeming Love Proclaim', pp. 252-3.

⁵¹ Manley, 'Redeeming Love Proclaim', chapter 4.

commended the ‘spirit of catholicism’ which he had seen in Gifford, and then concluded with a message for all his hearers:⁵²

Make much of the holy Bible!
 Make much of the holy Jesus!
 Make much of the holy Spirit!

The sentiments were suffused with experiential evangelical biblicism, and also echoed Moravian spirituality.

The cross – ‘united with the Saviour’

Although the whole Bible has been important to evangelicals, there has been a particular focus on the person of Jesus Christ and also on his sacrifice on the cross. This sacrifice is appropriated personally in conversion. Charles Wesley set this out in one of his classic hymns, ‘O for a thousand tongues to sing’ – the first hymn in the later Wesley hymnbooks and one intended ‘for the anniversary day of one’s conversion’. After the initial verses expressing general praise and prayer, there is a focus on Christ’s redemption:⁵³

O for a thousand tongues to sing
 My great Redeemer’s praise,
 The glories of my God and King,
 The triumphs of his grace!

 He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
 He sets the prisoner free;
 His blood can make the foulest clean;
 His blood availed for me.

The emphasis on the ‘blood of Christ’ is typically Moravian. A focus on the wounds of Christ and in his ‘wounded heart’ produced intense devotion among Moravian believers.⁵⁴ When John Wesley visited Herrnhut in 1738 he was particularly impressed by a Swedish member of the community, Arvid Gradin. As Wesley recorded in his essay, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection’, when he asked Gradin to give him a definition of ‘full assurance of faith’ Gradin emphasised ‘(r)epose in the blood of Christ.’⁵⁵ In 1734, when Zinzendorf had been burning a pile of papers he had seen one flutter to the ground and on it he had read: ‘Oh, let

⁵² J. Rippon, *A sermon occasioned by the death of the Reverend Andrew Gifford*, cited by Manley, ‘*Redeeming Love Proclaim*’, pp. 252, 255.

⁵³ Gill, *Charles Wesley: The First Methodist*, p. 72.

⁵⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 39.

⁵⁵ McGonigle, *John Wesley and the Moravians*, p. 12.

us in Thy nail-prints see, Our pardon and election free.’ He regarded this as a direct message from God, and began to concentrate on the suffering Christ on the cross and in particular on the title ‘Lamb of God’. This became the famous Moravian ‘Blood and Wounds Theology’. One of John Wesley’s leading associates, John Cennick, who became a Moravian (as did a number of other Methodists), was attracted by the power of the ‘Blood and Wounds Theology’, and when he read a ‘Litany of the Wounds’ composed by Zinzendorf he shed tears of joy. Over time, however, rather than concentrating on the spiritual value of the cross, increased attention began to be paid by Moravians to the details of crucifixion. By 1743 Zinzendorf was stating: ‘We will look for nothing else in the Bible but the Lamb and His Wounds.’⁵⁶

In this period the excessive interest in Christ’s physical suffering to be found among the Moravians threatened to cut them off from Lutherans and other Christians in Europe. Moravian devotion was often portrayed as obsessive. However, when this devotion was mediated through the celebration of Holy Communion it could become spiritually helpful. In Moravian worship the most important service was the Lord’s Supper. Zinzendorf’s conviction was that there was ‘no congregation without communion’. This no doubt reflected his Lutheran background. The service might also include the laying on of hands and foot-washing. Those assisting at communion wore a white alb tied with a red girdle, intended as a reminder that, like those ‘robed in white’ in the Book of Revelation, Moravians were in touch at Communion with heavenly reality.⁵⁷ There was a powerful solemnity. At the conclusion of the service the whole congregation might prostrate themselves. Several Roman Catholics who watched the celebration of a Moravian Communion at Fetter Lane, London (a Moravian meeting), apparently ‘liked it very well’.⁵⁸ Those present felt they were gathered into the Passion of Christ and into the whole community of the faithful, living and dead.⁵⁹ Towards the end of the 1740s Moravian spirituality increasingly highlighted how communicants were united with their ‘only Lover and Bridegroom’, and during this period (described as a ‘Sifting Time’ among Moravians) the Moravian congregations in England enjoyed massive expansion. Clearly the spirituality had attraction.⁶⁰ To take one example, Grace Brook, who

⁵⁶ J.E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (London: Moravian Publication Office, 1909), pp. 265, 275-6, 322.

⁵⁷ Freeman, ‘*Gemeine*: Count Nicholas von Zindendorf’s Understanding of the Church’, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England*, p. 147.

⁵⁹ Stead, ‘Moravian Spirituality and its Propagation’, p. 237.

⁶⁰ Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England*, pp. 135-6.

became a Moravian, ‘longed and wished still more to be united with the Saviour and his People and with them to eat His Flesh and Blood, that heavenly Repast in the Holy Communion; which was granted to her 19 November 1752, after which she enjoyed a constant Peace and Rest’.⁶¹

John Wesley’s views about the benefits of Holy Communion were formulated when he was a young Church of England priest, before his encounters with the Moravians. Like the Moravians he held a high view of the Communion, one which reflected both Calvinist and ‘catholic’ influences, and his approach remained substantially the same throughout his life. In a sermon preached in 1788, ‘The Duty of Constant Communion’, Wesley urged the frequent observance of the Lord’s Supper on the grounds that it was ‘a plain command of Christ’. In addition to that, there were ‘great benefits’ in Communion, notably ‘the forgiveness of our past sins and the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls’. The Lord’s Supper also, said Wesley, ‘gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection’. The reference to ‘perfection’ – an important theme in Wesley’s spirituality – is significant. Clearly for Wesley this was a meal with considerable spiritual significance. He urged:

Let every one therefore who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God and consult the good of his own soul by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord’s day service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day: Four times a week always, and every saint’s day beside. Accordingly those that joined in the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament.⁶²

Wesley added by way of explanation in the printed version of this sermon that it had been written over fifty-five years before, for the use of his pupils at Oxford.⁶³ In 1745 the Wesleys published *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, which contained 166 items. As F.C. Gill notes, the Communion hymns convey the depths and mystery of the Eucharist and are intended to nourish spiritual experience.⁶⁴

Although it was not the Moravian influence which gave John Wesley his high eucharistic views, Wesley’s visit to Herrnhut in 1738 and his observation of Moravian sacramental practice may have had an effect on him in a different kind of way. Wesley does not mention in his comments

⁶¹ Stead, ‘Moravian Spirituality and its Propagation’, pp. 242-3, 251.

⁶² A.C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 3, Sermon on ‘The Duty of Constant Communion’, Sermons, III (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 430.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 428.

⁶⁴ F.C. Gill, *Charles Wesley: The First Methodist* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), p. 123.

on his visit the fact that he was not invited to share in the Herrnhut community's celebration of the Lord's Supper, but this is noted by Daniel Benham, who wrote the biography of James Hutton, the first English Moravian. Benham reported:

When the congregation [at Herrnhut] saw Wesley to be *homo perturbatus*, and that his head had gained ascendancy over his heart, and being desirous not to interfere with his plan of effecting good as a clergyman of the English Church when he should become settled – for he always claimed to be a zealous English Churchman – they deemed it not prudent to admit him to that sacred service.⁶⁵

As Herbert McGonigle comments, whether this rebuff played a part in altering John Wesley's opinion of the Moravians is not clear, but over the next two years Wesley accused them of an unbalanced emphasis on 'stillness', which seemed to rule out human responsibility, of rejecting rather than encouraging the faith of those who did not have 'full assurance', of teaching that people were free from God's law (teaching known as antinomianism) and of preferring the 'modern mystics' to the Church Fathers. On the question of who should be admitted to Holy Communion, Wesley lodged a strong protest against Moravian practice. He saw Holy Communion as a 'converting ordinance', a means by which people could receive faith, rather than (as the Moravians were now teaching) an ordinance open only to those who had 'attained to the liberty of the gospel'.⁶⁶

The atoning work of Christ on the cross together with the personal experience of forgiveness through Christ's death became central to evangelical spirituality. David Gillett places evangelical devotion to Jesus as the Lamb of God, coupled with the daily awareness of forgiveness, alongside Roman Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.⁶⁷ What has been less evident among some evangelicals, however, has been a high (sacramental) view of Holy Communion – a high view that was, it is clear, held by both the Moravians and John Wesley. But there have been Baptists, and other evangelicals, who have maintained a more sacramental position. In *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper* (1748), Anne Dutton, a prolific Baptist author who corresponded with evangelical leaders such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, wrote in this way: 'As our Lord is spiritually present in his own ordinance, so he therein and thereby doth actually communicate, or

⁶⁵ D. Benham, *Memoirs of James Hutton* (London: 1856), p. 40.

⁶⁶ McGonigle, *John Wesley and the Moravians*, pp. 14–18; Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England*, p. 64.

⁶⁷ Gillett, *Trust and Obey*, p. 79.

give himself, his body broken, and his blood shed, with all the benefits of his death, to the worthy receivers.’ Dutton saw the Supper as God admitting believers ‘into the nearest Approach to his glorious Self’.⁶⁸ In the nineteenth century, Spurgeon argued for and practised weekly Communion, and was willing to speak of the ‘real presence’ of Christ at the Table.⁶⁹ In 1877, in one of his many Communion addresses, Spurgeon referred back to the movement in Bohemia that produced the Unity of the Brethren. He spoke in romantic vein of the ‘breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine’ being observed by persecuted believers, for example ‘in the mountains of Bohemia’. His point was that Communion, pointing as it did to the cross, was a mark that there had always been (and would always be) a Church of Christ, united to the Saviour.⁷⁰ Something of the Moravian experience of Christ was echoed by Spurgeon. ‘The Lord’s Supper’, he pronounced, ‘is no funeral meal, but a festival... the ‘Eucharist’, or the giving of thanks: it is not a fast, but a feast. My happiest moments are spent with the King at his table, when his banner over me is love.’⁷¹

Activism: ‘you bring the gospel to all the world’

To what extent, finally, does the well-known activism of evangelical life derive its power from Moravian influence? Some aspects of Moravian thinking in this area were not absorbed into evangelicalism. Thus for the Moravians the power to engage in active mission was from the Holy Spirit, but – controversially – the Spirit in early Moravian liturgy was ‘Mother’. The *Te Matrem*, a prayer to the Holy Spirit, which was for nearly thirty years (when Moravianism was at its most creative) a regular part of Moravian worship, says: ‘O Mother! Whoever knows you and the Saviour glorifies you because you bring the gospel to all the world’. As Craig Atwood notes, this aspect of Moravian theology has been played down by historians over the past two hundred years. But for Zinzendorf it was crucial. He claimed, speaking of the Holy Spirit, that ‘he did not know her before the year 1738’, and that this was ‘why I carefully avoided entering in the matter until the mother office of the Holy Spirit had been so clearly

⁶⁸ A. Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper, Relating to the Nature, Subjects, and right Partaking of this Solemn Ordinance* (London, 1748), p. 4, cited by M.A.G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1994), p. 295; cf. S. J. Stein, ‘A Note on Anne Dutton, Eighteenth-Century Evangelical’, *Church History*, Vol. 44 (1975), pp. 488-9.

⁶⁹ C.H. Spurgeon, ‘Mysterious Visits’, in *‘Till He Come’: Communion Meditations and Addresses by C.H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), p. 17.

⁷⁰ C.H. Spurgeon, ‘The Object of the Lord’s Supper’, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 51, S. No. 2942, 1 Cor. 11.26, delivered 2 September 1877, p. 320.

⁷¹ C.H. Spurgeon, ‘The Blood Shed for Many’, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, sermon on Matt. 26:28, Vol. 33, No. 1971, 3 July 1887, p. 377.

opened up to me'.⁷² Having come to a convinced position, Zinzendorf developed his arguments, suggesting in 1746-7 that the Spirit was the Mother of all believers in that she brought them to new birth. He saw his teaching as grounded in scripture, and drew together the idea of God the comforting Mother (Isa. 66:14) and the Spirit as Comforter in the teaching of Jesus (John 14:26).⁷³ This was linked with the Cross, since the Spirit, according to Zinzendorf, came out of the 'side-wound' of Christ (the water and the blood), and in turn that was related to the energising of the community for mission, a mission that was fully trinitarian – shaped by God the Father, the Spirit as Mother, and Jesus as Son/Brother/Husband.⁷⁴

After Zinzendorf's death in 1760, devotion to the Spirit as Mother was gradually dropped from Moravian liturgical life. The role of the Spirit was still stressed, but a revised Moravian litany in 1770 used the term 'Comforter' instead of 'Mother'. There was a continuing concern to convey the importance of the Spirit as the agent of conversion. Perhaps some Moravians did keep the older terminology alive: a Moravian missionary to the Cherokee Indians in Georgia, in 1810, referred in his diary to the 'mother heart' of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ By that time, however, the Moravians had long been seen not as a movement with an idiosyncratic pneumatology but as exemplars in the story of Protestant mission. There had been some wider mission by Protestants before the Moravians became active: the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1699) had a concern for overseas mission and David Brainerd worked among the North American Indians through the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (1710). But it was the remarkable movement of intrepid Moravian missionaries out from Herrnhut – from 1732 onwards – that caught the Protestant imagination. In 1732 Moravians were sent out by the Herrnhut community to work with slaves in the West Indies, and within ten years Moravian missionaries, believing that as a united fellowship they were following God's guidance, had gone to North America, Greenland, Surinam, South Africa, the Gold Coast, Algeria, Arctic Russia and Ceylon.⁷⁶

Although Anglican figures took an interest in Moravian initiatives, and Bishop Thomas Wilson of Sodor and Man – a venerable High Church bishop – became a member of Zinzendorf's Order of the Mustard Seed

⁷² C. Atwood, 'The Mother of God's People: The Adoration of the Holy Spirit in the Eighteenth-century Brüdergemeine', *Church History*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (1999), pp. 886-9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 891-5.

⁷⁴ Freeman, 'Gemeine: Count Nicholas von Zindendorf's Understanding of the Church', pp. 8-10.

⁷⁵ Atwood, 'The Mother of God's People', pp. 906-8.

⁷⁶ Freeman, 'Gemeine: Count Nicholas von Zindendorf's Understanding of the Church', p. 11.

(with its promise to ‘labour for the salvation and fellowship of all men’),⁷⁷ in the later eighteenth century it was among some Methodists and Baptists that the greatest impact was felt. Thomas Coke, a Methodist who helped to place missionaries in the West Indies in 1786, had contact with the Moravians.⁷⁸ The Moravians also had a crucial influence on the young Baptist minister, William Carey (1761-1834), and on the thinking that led to the formation in October 1792 of the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen, later known as the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS).⁷⁹ William Carey’s spiritual vision was set out in a book published in 1792, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. Carey argued that Roman Catholic missionaries had surmounted great obstacles in their missionary endeavours, and he then moved on to talk about the example of the Moravians. ‘Have not the missionaries of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Moravian Brethren’, he asked, ‘encountered the scorching heat of Abyssinia, and the frozen climes of Greenland and Labrador...?’ He then spent some time looking at efforts in world mission over the centuries up to the time he was writing, and concluded: ‘But none of the moderns have equalled the Moravian Brethren in this good work.’⁸⁰ By the turn of the century the Moravians had over 160 missionaries in service.

How did Carey obtain information about the Moravians and how did he use it? At the October 1792 meeting at which the BMS was formed it is possible that Carey referred to the Moravian missionary magazine usually known by its short title, *Periodical Accounts*. Joseph Hutton, in his *History of Moravian Missions*, writes that at the meeting ‘Carey flung down on the parlour table some numbers of a missionary magazine entitled *Periodical Accounts*’, and as he argued for Baptist missionary enterprise he exclaimed: ‘See what these Moravians have done!’⁸¹ S. Pearce Carey, who was Carey’s biographer and his grandson, claimed that Carey was a reader of *Periodical Accounts* ‘from the first’ and that he challenged his fellow-Baptists, some of whom were sceptical or cautious about world mission, to take note of ‘what Moravians are daring, and some of them British like

⁷⁷ Podmore, ‘The Anglicans and the Brethren’, pp. 628-9.

⁷⁸ Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England*, p. 57.

⁷⁹ For the Baptist Missionary Society, see B. Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).

⁸⁰ The full text of Carey’s *Enquiry* is in T. George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Leicester: IVP, 1991).

⁸¹ J.E. Hutton, *A History of Moravian Missions* (London: Moravian Publication Office [1923]), p. 3; cf. D.A. Schattschneider, ‘William Carey, Modern Missions and the Moravian Influence’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1998), pp. 8-12.

ourselves, and many only artisan and poor'.⁸² William Carey's interest in the Moravians continued. A crucial step in mission for the Moravians was planting a *Gemeine* (Zinzendorf's usual word for a church community) where the life of Christ was expressed, and sometimes this meant people living together in communities that resembled the arrangements at Herrnhut. In 1796, writing from Mudnabati, India, to Andrew Fuller, the Secretary of the BMS, William Carey proposed just such an arrangement. He suggested seven or eight Christian families living together, 'similar to what the Moravians do'.⁸³ Although it is sometimes thought that evangelical spirituality is fundamentally individualistic, the Moravian vision, which resonated with Baptist ecclesiology, was for a corporate expression of Christian living.

C.H. Spurgeon took a particular interest in how the story of Moravian missions was retold. The article he published by his brother in 1867 argued (following Carey) that the Moravians had done more for the spread of the gospel than any other movement up to that time. James Spurgeon referred to an early Moravian prophecy that God would 'kindle a light... which shall shine over the whole country' and took the view that this had certainly been fulfilled.⁸⁴ C.H. Spurgeon greatly admired the ingenuity of the Moravians and their 'holy, apostolic labour', and in the light of that admiration he was deeply disappointed by a book on the Moravians by Augustus C. Thompson which failed, he considered, to do justice to the adventure of Moravian mission. Writing in *The Sword and the Trowel* in 1884, Spurgeon characterised the book as 'good history, and yet dull reading'. He emphasised that he considered the 'grand labour' of the Moravians to be 'a wonderful story, the very romance of Missions', and a subject 'worthy of the pen of Sir Walter Scott'. Spurgeon continued his review along these lines, stating that...

...in this volume it [the story] grows dreary. So little incident, so little of moving, living, thrilling picture, where one looked for so much... It is a fine volume, and as a history it is beyond praise; we are perhaps unwise in looking for other qualities in it. Well, let this volume stand in the heavy-armed phalanx, but pray give us a popular book with all the glorious incidents in full march, casting darts of fire among this half-hearted generation.⁸⁵

⁸² S.P. Carey, *William Carey* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), p. 90.

⁸³ T.G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), p. 136.

⁸⁴ J.A. Spurgeon, 'Moravian Brethren', pp. 217-19.

⁸⁵ *The Sword and the Trowel*, March 1884, p. 141, reviewing *Moravian Missions Twelve Lectures*, by Augustus C. Thompson DD.

‘Look at the Moravians’, Spurgeon urged his students and fellow-ministers on another occasion, ‘how every man or woman becomes a missionary, and how much they do for the Lord in consequence. Let us catch their spirit.... It is not enough for us to say, “Those Moravians are very wonderful people.” We ought to be wonderful people, too.’⁸⁶ ‘Evangelicalism’, as Bebbington noted with reference to the eighteenth century, ‘learned much from the Moravians’.⁸⁷ The inspiration of their contribution has lived on.

Conclusion

In this study I have tried to show something of the significance of the Pietistic and Moravian movements of renewal in central Europe for the wider story of the development of evangelical spirituality. The Moravian contribution has been somewhat neglected in the English-speaking evangelical world, although there are signs that this has been changing more recently. Moravian spirituality offers a picture of Christ coming to the heart of the believer in a powerful way, but the life of faith that ensues is a life which is marked by submission to Christ and his word, by the cross, and by sacrificial service. In his outstanding book, *The Cross of Christ* (1986), John Stott, the foremost international evangelical leader of the second half of the twentieth century, as well as engaging with a range of theological issues to do with the nature of atonement, also looks at the ‘community of celebration’ that lives ‘under the cross’. In this section of the book Stott uses the Moravians as an example of a community ‘comprehensively stimulated by the cross’ and he draws attention to their seal, bearing the inscription in Latin, ‘Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow him.’ The focus of the worship at Herrnhut, Stott emphasises, was ‘Christ crucified’, yet at the same time they were also called ‘the Easter people’, because it was the risen Lamb whom they adored.⁸⁸ This was a full-orbed experience of Christ. It is noteworthy that James Spurgeon associated the ‘power’ of the Moravians to spread the gospel in many countries with Christian ‘discipline and piety’ – in fact with spirituality.⁸⁹

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⁸⁶ C.H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1900), p. 66.

⁸⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 40.

⁸⁸ J. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), pp. 293-4.

⁸⁹ J.A. Spurgeon, ‘Moravian Brethren’, p. 218.

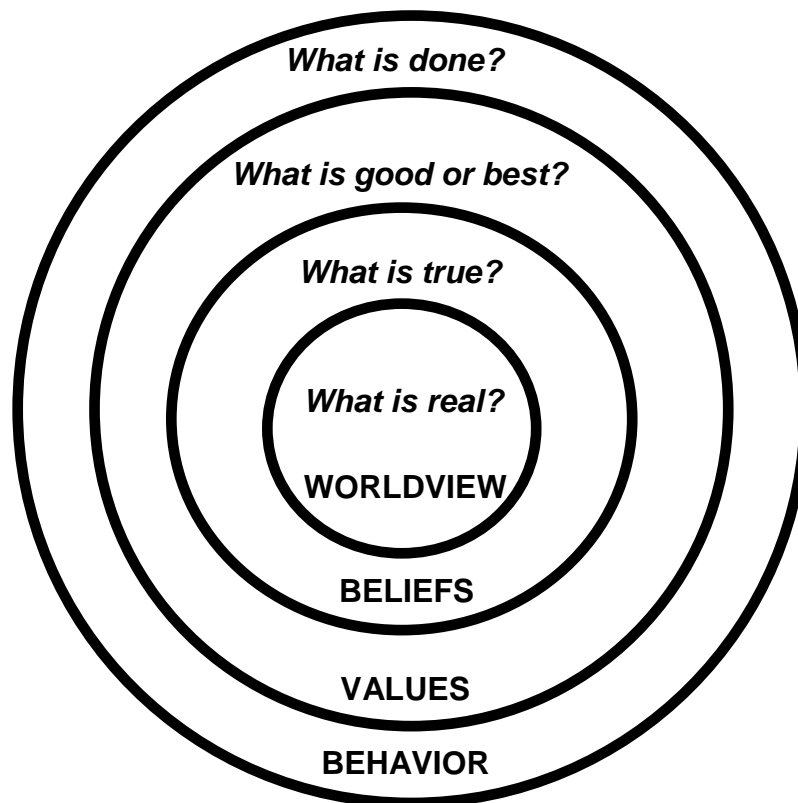
A Model for Introducing Christian Ethics

Introduction

In recent years, I have had the privilege of teaching Christian ethics at a number of colleges and seminaries in eastern and central Europe. In these teaching experiences I deal not only with the differences of languages and cultures, but also with time restrictions. The schedule for these courses is very intensive, varying from a minimum of three to a maximum of ten days, the most common schedule being five days.

I began looking for a way to teach Christian ethics more effectively under these circumstances. The solution came from an unexpected source. While preparing to teach a course on Missions and Evangelism at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, I discovered a model for understanding culture developed by Lloyd Kwast, Chairman of the Department of Missions at Talbot Theological Seminary. His model portrays several successive 'layers' or levels of understanding as you move into the real heart of a culture.¹

Lloyd Kwast's 'Cultural Layers'



¹ Lloyd Kwast, 'Understanding Culture', Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne: *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena California: William Carey Library, 1981), p. 361.

I used the model in the missions class and found it helpful. Later I included the model in a sermon delivered in a chapel service at the seminary. Following the service, Dr Parush Parushev, the Academic Dean, asked if he could borrow my model drawing. He then used it during a seminar on ethics for graduate students. During the course of the seminar I had one of those ‘Aha!’ moments. Could this model be used for understanding ethics as well as cultures? I discussed the concept with Dr Parushev who encouraged me to pursue the idea.

I reflected on the concept, did some research, and experimented with the model: adapting it, expanding it, revising it, and transforming it again and again. During this formative period, I received input and encouragement from my colleagues – Dr Parush Parushev; Dr Glen Stassen, professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California; and the Revd Fyodor Raychynets, Academic Dean at the Bible Institute of the Christian Baptist Church of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. They contributed insights and suggestions that were invaluable to me in developing the model.

I received a positive response when I first used the model in classes at the Bible Institute in Sarajevo and the College of Theology and Education in Novi Sad, Serbia. The model was presented and discussed at a post-graduate seminar at the International Baptist Theological Seminary and incorporates comments and suggestions made by participants in that seminar, Keith Jones, Parush Parushev, Peter Penner and Toivo Pilli.

This model for introducing Christian Ethics to undergraduate students is still a work in progress, not a finished product. It is open to further revision and refinement based on new insight and understanding. As with any model, it has its limitations and inadequacies. No model can explore all the various dimensions or explain all the many complexities of Christian ethics. A model can, however, serve as a beginning point – a way of introducing Christian ethics.

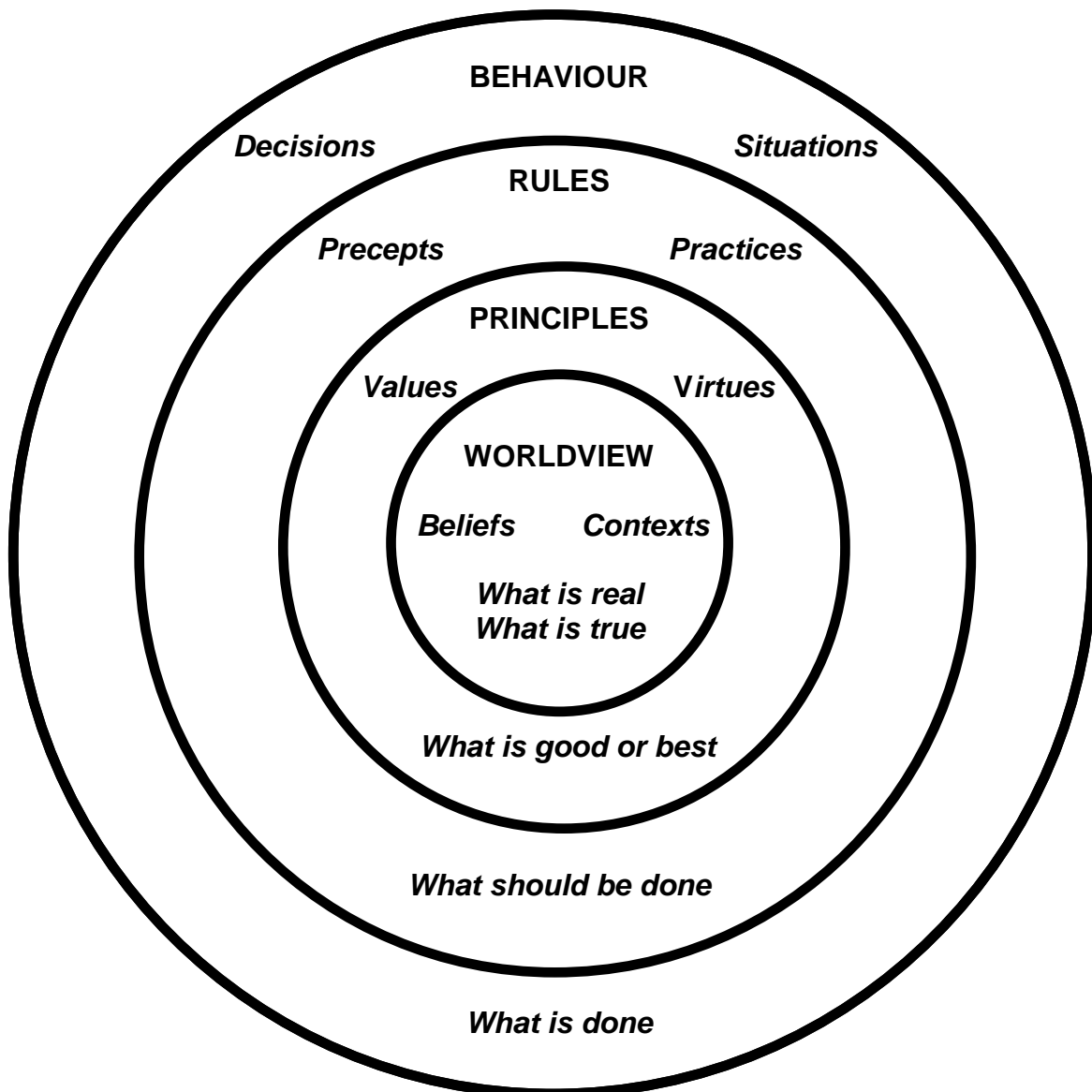
The model has demonstrated its validity and value for me as I teach Christian Ethics under the circumstances described above. It is *a visual model* that communicates across language barriers. It is *a simple model* that facilitates understanding across cultural barriers. It is *a practical model* that provides students with a useful tool to help them understand the Christian ethic.

The core of the model is *worldview*, reflecting the premise that ethics is based upon our worldview. Our worldview has practical and ethical consequences across the spectrum of life: determining the *principles* we

value (level three); impacting the *rules* we live by (level two); and influencing the *choices* we make and the *actions* we take (level one).

The core of the model (worldview) and the outer layer (behaviour) are retained from Kwast's model of culture. The second layer (rules) and the third layer (principles) are adopted from the four levels of moral norms described by Glen Stassen and David Gushee in their book, *Kingdom Ethics*.²

A Model for Introducing Christian Ethics



² Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics, Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 102-103.

Level One: Behaviour

What is done

The first level of the model is ***behaviour***. This level reflects one of the main tasks of ethics, ***to decide what to do in a particular situation***. Behaviour focuses on the biblical emphasis on *doing* rather than *knowing* or *saying* (Matt.7:21-23). Truth is perceived as personal and practical. It is to be obeyed, to be done, to be lived.

Decisions

Behaviour involves ***decisions***. We *decide* what to do. We are autonomous beings with freedom of choice. We exercise that freedom by making decisions to act in a certain way. Those choices chart the course of life. We are responsible for our choices and accountable for our actions.

Situations

Behaviour is influenced by a variety of ***situations***. Some situations may be normal with clear, sharp distinctions and simple choices. Other situations may be complex or ambiguous, calling for difficult decisions. We must decide what to do in *a particular situation*.

Some moral theories such as existentialism and situationism focus on this level and make it the most important level of ethics. ***Existentialism*** views the ethical life as one of existential decision. The individual makes a decision in the immediacy of the moment relying on personal experience and understanding without outside objective standards or a supporting system. To choose and to act is to exist authentically.

Situationism is a radically contextual ethic in which the individual looks at each unique situation and determines ‘then and there’³ what is the ‘loving thing to do’⁴ in that particular predicament. Each situation is so different that rules do not apply. Rules get in the way and restrict the individual’s freedom to choose. Situationism provides a corrective to legalism’s failure to acknowledge the importance of context.

Both existentialism and situationism are *highly individualistic*. Moral decisions are personal and private, the responsibility of the person who makes them. ‘I make my own decisions and nobody else has any business telling me what to do.’ These approaches are also *intensely subjective*. Moral decisions become ‘nothing but expressions of preference,

³ Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 134.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

expressions of attitude or feeling',⁵ that relegate ethics to the realm of subjective opinion. In these approaches, personal choices do not reflect or express morality they actually *create* morality.⁶ Decisions become the foundation of morality.⁷

Behaviour is an important dimension of Christian ethics. Deciding what to do in a particular situation is a major ethical task. However, ethics cannot be based on this concept alone. Christian ethics involves far more. To understand Christian ethics we must move from the surface level of observable behaviour to a deeper level. What lies beneath the surface? Why do we decide to do what we do in a given situation? What supports our decisions to act?

Level Two: Rules

What should be done

The second level of understanding is ***rules***. The focus at this level is on discovering the right thing to do – a rule – and then applying it to a particular case. Rules are direct and concrete. They specifically tell us *what should be done*. They support or criticise behaviour by defining and determining what is ethical and appropriate. Rules are not limited to one particular case but apply to all similar cases.⁸

A fundamental question at this level is 'Who makes the rules?' The humanistic answer is that *men* make the rules. Rules are either culturally determined by social contract, or individually determined by persons subjectively making their own rules. The Christian answer is that *God* makes the rules. Rules are rooted in God's will and known through divine revelation.

Precepts

Rules consist of ***precepts***, direct commands that define ethical behaviour either positively or negatively: 'Do this' or 'Don't do that'. The Bible contains divinely revealed exhortations or commands that provide moral guidance for human actions. We are to do what we are obligated to do by God's commandments. Obviously we must be careful to differentiate

⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 11-12.

⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 7.

⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 13.

⁸ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, pp. 102-103.

between those biblical laws that were specifically intended for people of ancient times and those intended to govern life in every era.⁹ Most people would agree that the many civic and ceremonial laws found in the Old Testament are not binding on us today. However, such precepts as the Old Testament ethical laws summarised in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), the imperatives found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and the prohibitions listed in Paul's epistles (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:25-31) are valid guides for Christian behaviour.

Practices

Practices also function at the rules level.¹⁰ Practices are socially established cooperative activities. They are patterned ways of doing things within a community: 'We do things this way.' Practices constitute what a church must do to be the church.¹¹ They include such things as worship, prayer, witness, acts of mercy, confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, service to others, and bearing one another's burdens.¹² Bernard Suits compares practices with games. Games must have a goal, a means of playing, rules that prescribe and proscribe certain acts, and an attitude that intends to play.¹³ Practices become normative and authoritative because they are linked to certain Christian virtues and are 'derived from the work of Jesus Christ in relation to the Holy Spirit and God the Father in the New Testament.'¹⁴

Both precepts and practices are learned and maintained in the context of a community of people over a period of time. James McClendon declares, 'There is no solitary Christianity. The moral life of Christians is a social life.'¹⁵ As participating members of the community we are expected to obey the laws, meet the requirements and engage in the practices of the community.

At the rules level we must be careful to avoid two extremes: antinomianism and legalism. *Antinomianism* teaches that there are no absolute, objective, binding moral laws. This understanding can lead to

⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest, Foundations of Christian Ethics* (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), p. 244.

¹⁰ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, p. 124.

¹¹ Nancey Murphy, 'Using MacIntyre's Method in Christian Ethics', Nancey Murphy, Brad J. Kallenberg and Mark Thiessen Nation, *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997), p. 33.

¹² Craig Dykstra, 'Reconceiving Practice in Theological Inquiry and Education', *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹³ Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 35.

¹⁴ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, p. 122.

¹⁵ James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology Vol 1, Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), p. 165.

moral relativism or moral license. Existentialism, nihilism, emotivism, situationism, and hedonism are examples of antinomianism. Paul addressed the problem of antinomianism in his letter to the church of Corinth (I Cor. 6:12). At the other extreme, **legalism** places too much importance on rules making them the foundation of ethics. Legalism declares that morality is defined and determined by conformity to rules that are absolute, universal and without exceptions.¹⁶ Legalism can lead people to become rigid, arbitrary, unloving, and irrational.

What about legalism's claim that rules are absolute and without exception? What do you do when two rules are in conflict? For example, what if the only way you can prevent a murder is by telling a lie? We respond to such questions by first affirming that rules are there for a reason. They express important principles and convictions. They are needed, they are binding on us, and they are to be obeyed. However, there can be rare exceptions to the rules. Any exception should be just that, *an exception!* An exception should be made with great caution and care, and should occur only if another rule or a principle overrides it.¹⁷

The rules-oriented approach has value for Christian ethics and should not be discounted. It elevates the authority and relevance of scripture and it brings clarity, concreteness, and consistency to the understanding of ethics.¹⁸ Rules provide clear guidelines for Christian behaviour and give concrete expression to Christian principles. For many years, ethical reasoning was content with this level of understanding. It still remains the focus of much of Roman Catholic moral theology and continues to be a popular ethical method for many evangelicals. However, a rules-oriented approach to Christian ethics has some serious weaknesses. It fails to give serious consideration to novel situations and unfamiliar issues. Furthermore, it overlooks the theological foundations for the rules. An adequate understanding of ethics requires that we move to a deeper level.

Level Three: Principles

What is good or best

The third level of the model is **principles**. Rules are significant, but their true importance lies in their status as expressions of deeper, underlying principles.¹⁹ Principles are broad general concepts that govern moral

¹⁶ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, p. 111.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁸ Dennis P. Hollinger, *Choosing the Good* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 140.

¹⁹ Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, p. 244.

responses. Principles are the basis or the foundation of the rules.²⁰ They support the rules and practices. They also limit them, setting the parameters of moral conduct. This level emphasises that principles rather than rules define and determine what is ethical. As indicated above, principles can override rules when the principles demand it.

At this level we move from a focus on ‘doing’ to a concern for ‘being’. Ethics is not primarily about making the right decisions or following the right rules, but about being the right kind of person. We are not just to *do* good; we are to *be* good. Jesus said, ‘Every good tree bears good fruit’ (Matt. 7:17). The central feature of ethics shifts from a concern about whether specific actions are right or wrong (What should be done?) to a quest for *values* (What is best?) or a concern about character-forming *virtues* (What is good?).²¹

Values

Values may be defined as our judgment of that which is esteemed, considered important, or given priority status. Some have attempted to identify a single value such as *pleasure* (John Stuart Mill); *power* (Friedrich Nietzsche); *well-being* (Aristotle); *self-interest* (Ayn Rand); *self-actualisation* (Harold Titus and Morris Keeton) and *caring* (Carol Gilligan). Others have taken a pluralistic approach, holding that there are a number of moral values including such things as pleasure, knowledge, truth, beauty, virtue, harmony, love, justice, freedom, and self-expression.²²

Values are often considered highly *individualistic* (‘personal values’). However, values may be *communal* (‘shared values’). Kwast defines values as “‘pre-set’ decisions that a culture makes between choices commonly faced”.²³ Communal values help those in the community to know what should be done to ‘fit in’ or to conform to the community pattern of life.

Virtues

Virtues are character traits that are valued as being good or morally excellent. There are many listings of virtues. Plato in *The Republic* identified four cardinal virtues: justice, temperance, prudence and fortitude. The Book of Proverbs focuses on the virtues of wisdom in everyday life.

²⁰ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, p. 103.

²¹ Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, p. 208.

²² McClendon, *Ethics*, p. 344.

²³ Kwast, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, p. 362.

Jesus' Beatitudes identify the 'virtues of Kingdom people'.²⁴ (Matt. 5:1-12) In his epistles, Paul has six lists containing a total of twenty-one virtues (Col. 3:12-17; Philip. 2:2-3; Eph. 4:2-3; Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 14:17; and 2 Cor. 6:4-10). Peter has a list of eight virtues (2 Pet. 1:5-8). Primary virtues are those that reflect the character of God as incarnated by Jesus Christ, revealed in scripture and empowered by the Holy Spirit such as *love* (1 John 4:8), *justice* (Deut. 32:4), *holiness* (Lev. 19:2) and *goodness* (Exodus 34:5-7). The virtuous life is a life of Godliness or Christlikeness.

Virtues are not simply moral abstractions to be admired. They are moral qualities to be acquired. They are internalised qualities, traits, habits and skills that form and shape our character. They are to become *embedded* in our hearts and *embodied* in our lives, what Stassen and Gushee call '*incarnational discipleship*'.²⁵ We are to become virtuous persons.

The virtuous life is rooted in, nurtured and sustained by a community that knows what it means to be good. We learn virtues and develop the skill of exercising them in a community of faith that carries on the moral tradition. The church provides the context for developing character by teaching virtues in its communal stories and embodying virtues in its community life. James McClendon, Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas emphasise narratives or stories told by particular communities as the primary means of moral education.²⁶

Principlism comes closer to being an adequate approach to and foundation for Christian ethics than the previous two levels. Its focus on character and virtue and its emphasis on the role of communities and their stories are commendable. However, as Dennis Hollinger points out: 'it fails to deal adequately with the following questions: Why be moral at all? What is the basis for saying that one virtue or disposition or action is more laudable than another? How do we respond, as people of Christian character, to the tough, complex, moral issues that call for decision?'²⁷ Principles alone can never be the foundation of Christian ethics. Principles must have an adequate support system. They must be rooted and nourished in something even more basic. We move then to the final level of our model, the core.

²⁴ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, pp. 32ff.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁶ McClendon, *Ethics*, pp. 327-351, MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 201-203; Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 24-29.

²⁷ Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, p. 60.

The Core: Worldview

What is real; What is true

The core element of the model is a *Christian worldview*. This is as deep as we can go in our attempt to understand Christian ethics. Worldview serves as the ultimate foundation of Christian ethics, the bedrock basis for our principles, rules, decisions and actions. Dennis Hollinger declares, ‘To assert that worldviews are always at the heart of ethical reflections and moral actions is not a peculiarly Christian understanding. Many social scientists believe a profound relationship exists between worldview and ethics... there is always an interplay between metaphysics and morals, or worldview and ethos.’²⁸

Immanuel Kant coined the term *weltanschauung* (worldview) in his work, *Critique of Judgment*, in 1790.²⁹ It soon became a popular concept among intellectuals in Germany and other European countries. From the continent it migrated to England and the United States. James Orr, a Scottish Presbyterian theologian, and Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch Reformed theologian, are given credit for introducing the worldview concept to Protestant evangelicalism. Orr published his book, *The Christian View of God and the World*, in 1893. Kuyper published his work, *Creating a Christian Worldview*, five years later in 1898. Other major contributors to making worldview one of the central concepts in contemporary evangelical thought include Gordan Clark: *A Christian View of Man*; Francis A. Schaeffer: *The God Who Is There*; Carl F.H. Henry: *The Uneasy Conscience of American Fundamentalism*; James Sire: *The Universe Next Door*; David K. Naugle: *Worldview, the History of a Concept*; and Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey: *How Now Shall We Live?*³⁰ David Naugle states, ‘I believe that conceiving of biblical faith as a worldview has been one of the more important developments in the recent history of the church... It offers the church a fresh perspective on the holistic nature, cosmic dimensions, and universal applications of the faith.’³¹

A variety of definitions have been offered for worldview. Perhaps the best-known definition is the one given by James Sire: ‘A worldview is a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously) about the basic makeup of our world.’³² Phillips and

²⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

²⁹ David K Naugle, *Worldview, the History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), p. 58.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 5-29.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

³² James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988), p. 17.

Brown declare, 'A worldview is, first of all, *an explanation and interpretation of the world* and second, *an application of this view to life*.'³³ Walsh and Middleton state succinctly, 'A world view provides a model of *the world* which guides its adherents *in the world*.'³⁴ N.T. Wright says that worldviews are 'the basic stuff of human existence, the lens through which the world is seen, the blueprint for how one should live in it, and above all the sense of identity and place which enables human beings to be what they are.'³⁵ To state it simply, worldview is our basic conception of reality.

Contexts

Our worldview is shaped by the multiple experiences of life within our various *contexts* such as family, church and culture. Contexts influence how we understand moral truths and how we apply them in our world. Contexts are not higher in authority than the Scriptures, but they are our starting point. We do not just sit down and think up a worldview. It is formed by the stories, virtues, practices, behaviour, symbols and rituals of our family, church and culture. Contexts also provide the arena for the final task of ethics, the 'pragmatic task'¹⁰ – the task of embodying the Christian ethic in the various contexts of life.

Those stories that are told to make sense of reality are major components of worldview. Human beings are inherent storytellers. They primarily fulfil their need to resolve the mysteries of the universe by telling stories. Every civilisation has its mythology, foundational stories of gods, origins, existence, and heroes that provide guidance and set parameters for ethical conduct.

Stories provide a vital framework for experiencing the world. Narratives establish a symbolic world that we are able to experience vicariously. We become part of the story, 'inhabiting' it. The story in turn becomes part of us, 'inhabiting' us. The story becomes *our* story. Its perspective becomes our perspective.

These stories serve in a normative fashion as 'controlling stories',¹¹ shaping consciousness and orienting life to the great powers that establish the reality of a community's world.

³³ W. Gary Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of Your World* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), p. 22.

³⁴ Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 22.

³⁵ N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), p. 124.

¹⁰ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), p. 7.

¹¹ Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, pp. 41-42.

For Christians those ‘controlling stories’ are found in the Bible. They include narratives about individuals; narratives about Israel, Christ and the church; and the overarching meta-narrative – the story of *creation, fall, redemption and consummation*. The central feature of the sacred narrative is the gospel of Jesus Christ. N.T. Wright summarises the fundamental meta-narrative of the Bible as follows:

The story is about a creator and his *creation*, about humans made in this creator’s image and given tasks to perform, about the *rebellion* of humans and the dissonance of creation at every level, and particularly about the creator’s acting, through Israel and climactically through Jesus, to *rescue* his creation from its ensuing plight. The story continues with the creator acting by his own spirit within the world to bring it towards the *restoration* which is his intended goal for it.¹²

These narratives are not incidental, they are *essential* to a Christian worldview. They ‘possess a kind of finality as the ultimate interpretation of reality in all its multifaceted aspects. Such stories are considered sacred, and they provide the adhesive that unites those who believe in them into a society characterized by shared perspectives and a common way of life.’¹³

The narratives are remembered, embodied and reinforced by the symbols we use and the ceremonial rituals we perform in our communities of faith.¹⁴ The *cross* symbolises the central feature of our faith, the redemptive act of God in Christ. The *worship* of God re-enacts our concept of ultimate reality and its implications for everyday life. The act of *baptism* portrays the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the reality of our new life in Christ. The liturgy of the *Eucharist* embodies the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ, proclaims the promise of his return, and assures us of our redemption and our hope of glory. Christian ethics begins in and is nurtured by a community that carries the story of God.

Beliefs

Those fundamental *beliefs* that we hold with deep commitment and passion, are also key components of a Christian worldview. They comprise a rational approach in which we attempt to provide an analytical, systematic formula or framework for the truths that emerge from biblical narratives. Basic beliefs are rooted in sacred narratives and expressed in propositions, doctrines, statements of faith, or creeds. These beliefs provide

¹² Ibid., p. 132.

¹³ Naugle, *Worldview, the History of a Concept*, p. 303.

¹⁴ Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, p. 63.

answers to basic worldview questions about ultimate reality and truth. The number and composition of these basic questions vary.

N.T. Wright identifies four basic questions:

1. Who are we?
2. Where are we?
3. What is wrong?
4. What is the solution?¹⁵

James Sire lists seven basic questions:

1. What is prime reality – the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right or wrong?
7. What is the meaning of history?¹⁶

I propose the following set of six basic questions:

1. What is ultimate reality? (*Ontology*)
2. What is the origin and nature of the universe? (*Cosmology*)
3. What is the origin, nature and destiny of man? (*Anthropology*)
4. What is the meaning of history? (*History*)
5. How do we know what we know? (*Epistemology*)
6. How should we then live? (*Ethics*)

How do our basic Christian beliefs respond to these six questions? When we propose specific answers, we recognise that theological differences exist in various strands of the Christian church. Yet, there is basic agreement on many of the core elements of Christian theology. Here is an attempt to provide potential Christian responses to the basic questions of reality.

1. *What is ultimate reality? God is ultimate reality.*

God is *self-existent*, ‘the One who *is*’; and *immutable*, unchanging in nature, desire and purpose.

God is *infinite*, unlimited by time or space or matter; and *personal* (Triune), Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

¹⁵ Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, pp. 132-133.

¹⁶ Sire, *The Universe Next Door* p. 18.

God is *transcendent*, exalted above all; and *immanent*, in all and sustaining all.

God is *omniscient*, all knowing; and *omnipotent*, all-powerful.

God is *sovereign* of the universe; and the *source* of all that exists.

God is revealed most fully through the *incarnation*. In Jesus Christ 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us' (John 1:14).

2. *What is the origin and nature of the universe? God created the cosmos out of nothing (ex nihilo).*

God spoke the cosmos into existence out of nothing. Nature did not self-generate the cosmos through some quantum fluctuation, it was the deliberate act of a supernatural, personal being.

The universe God designed is *orderly not chaotic*. There are laws of physics that govern the interplay of matter and energy under conditions that can be precisely observed and exactly measured.

The cosmos that God created is *good not evil*.

3. *What is the origin, nature and destiny of man? God created man in His own image (imago dei).*

At the apex of creation, God created mankind. Mankind did not originate from a chance act of nature, which evolved through natural selection into complex life forms, and eventually into human beings.

Man is more than an animal or a complex stimulus-response mechanism; he is a creature in the image of his Creator.

The *image of God* implies the inherent dignity and worth of persons ('that's good'), reflects the relational dimension of life ('male and female'), and indicates a stewardship role in creation ('have dominion'). Mankind rebelled against his Creator and the image of God was defaced by sin. As a consequence of the *fall* man became alienated from God, from others, from nature, and from himself.

God initiated a process of *redemption* to overcome the alienations from the fall. Redemption ultimately became possible through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God's own Son. In Christ man becomes a new creation.

Death is not the extinction of man's conscious existence; it is a doorway leading either to *eternal life* with God or to *eternal separation* from God.

4. ***What is the meaning of history? God is the Lord of history.***

History is HIS-story, a magnificent story. It has a beginning point, creation. It has a middle, a series of people and events related by cause and effect. It has a known ending.

History has *meaning* because God is in control and He is working for good.

History has *purpose*. It is moving toward a grand and glorious climax when Christ shall return in triumph, history will be closed by judgment, and a new age inaugurated beyond time.

History is one of the means by which God reveals Himself as He acts in human history.

5. ***How do we know what we know? God is the source of truth.***

Truth is not determined subjectively or experientially by an individual. Neither is it determined culturally by the consensus of the group. *God* is the author of truth.

God *reveals* truth through *general revelation* in creation and through *special revelation* in Scripture, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

God reveals truth through the *tradition* or teachings of the Church.

God reveals truth through *reason* – not reason in the Enlightenment sense which claims complete autonomy from revelation – but reason as a God-given tool to help understand revelation.

6. ***How should we then live? God is the source of the ethical life.***

God is the *ground* of Christian ethics. Our understanding of the ethical life emanates from the nature of God Himself who personifies the good.

God is the *standard* of Christian ethics. Ethical norms are reflections of God's character as incarnated in Christ. We are to be like God. We are to love for *God is love*. We are to be just for *God is just*. We are to be holy for *God is holy*. We are to be good for *God is good*.

God is the *power* for Christian ethics. God's Holy Spirit is the dynamic empowering the ethical life.¹⁷

Our worldview, expressed as biblical narratives and as basic beliefs, provides us with a firm *theological foundation* for Christian ethics. Stanley Grenz declares, 'Ultimately, ethical living means ordering our steps in every situation of life according to the fundamental faith commitments we share as Christians. It involves putting into practice – living out in the day-to-day realities of our lives – our fundamental Christian commitments. And

¹⁷ Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, pp. 64-68.

in the end, these commitments are theological.’¹⁸ The ethical life is life lived ‘under God and before God’.¹⁹

Conclusion

Balance

The model of Christian ethics presents *a balanced approach* to Christian ethics. It not only focuses on the importance of the *being* dimension but also recognises the need for the *doing* dimension. The two dimensions complement each other. On the one hand, character informs our practices, decisions and actions. On the other hand, our practices, decisions and actions inform our character.

The model not only emphasises the importance of *community relationships*, but it also takes *individuals* seriously. It gives proper attention to a person’s moral growth and development. Individuals are perceived as persons on a journey or quest for moral excellence, integrity and authenticity. It also recognises that communities of faith provide the mentors, models, education and nurture that are necessary for persons on that journey.

The model recognises the significant role of *narratives* as primary carriers of moral traditions. However, it does not preclude *other modes* of communication and understanding such as propositions, precedents, paradigms, precepts and principles.⁴⁶ Narratives and these other modes work together to nurture and sustain the ethical life.

Function

When we begin at the outer level of the model and move inward toward the core, we emphasise the *supportive function* of the model. *Behaviour* is supported by *rules*, which are supported by *principles*, which are supported by *worldview*. Worldview is the core element of the model and the ultimate foundation of our moral life at all levels. This use of the model perceives worldview as the *foundation* of all reality including moral reality. The moral life *rests upon* our worldview.

When we begin at the core of the model and move outward toward the first level, we emphasise the *shaping function* of the model. *Worldview* shapes *principles*, which shape *rules*, which shape *behaviour*. ‘Moral

¹⁸ Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 257.

⁴⁶ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, p. 209.

goodness is *defined by* and *flows from* the ultimate source of goodness.’⁴⁷ Our Christian worldview is the *source* that shapes our *principles*: determining our values, defining our virtues, and forming our character. Our worldview impacts the *rules* we live by, our precepts and practices. It guides our *behaviour*, the decisions we make to act in particular situations. This use of the model perceives worldview as the *fountain* of all reality including moral reality. The moral life *flows from* our worldview.

This model is too simple to explore the multiple dimensions of Christian ethics or to explain its many complex components. However, it is the simplicity of the model that commends it as a basic tool for beginning to understand and apply Christian ethics.

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⁴⁷ Hollinger, p. 86.

A Comparative Mapping of Baptist Moral Concerns and Identity in Six Regions of Europe and Central Asia

1. Introduction

This essay brings together responses to our Church and Context Survey on the issue of ethics for six regions in Europe: Armenia, Bulgaria, Moldova, the North Caucasus region of Russia, Omsk Oblast in Russia, and Poland, as well as the responses for the integrated region of Central Asia.¹ It also refers to another study using our survey for the Volga region in Russia. The survey itself covers various other issues, but the intention of this essay is to examine only those survey responses relating to moral issues. The essay then explores some of this data through qualitative research involving various people working in or familiar with the regions. In particular, the issues of church unity, marriage, and pornography are considered beyond the results of the quantitative survey data.

2. Responses to ‘Moral Issues’ on the Church and Context Survey, and Reporting the Data

The surveys were conducted between 2002 and 2005. The anonymous respondents identified themselves only according to their ecclesiastical affiliation, gender, and age. Ecclesiastically, the survey was conducted mainly among Baptists but also a few others in the believers’ church tradition – the results reported are valid for Baptists in particular. Thus they do not represent Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran and other such congregations in the regions but may have considerable overlap with other baptistic (believers’ baptism, congregational) groups. This also means that respondents see themselves in a minority situation, concerned to maintain their identity and reach out evangelistically to others. Ethical issues play a role in this: to distinguish a people as separated for service to God while practising a life that is winsome rather than closed off to the world.

Gender has not been considered in this report, except in the case of data from Poland. This is because the samples from the other contexts do not have sufficient representation of women for conclusions to be drawn.

¹ The responses are collected by a research team in Rollin G. Grams and Parush R Parushev, eds., *Church and Context Survey, Part 1: Baptists in Armenia, Bulgaria, Central Asia, Moldova, North Caucasus, Omsk, and Poland*, to be published in the IBTS Research Publication Series.

The same is true for the age of the respondents. It is likely that these factors would make a difference of some sort were we able to report large enough representations of each group (our previous work did begin to explore this with the responses from Poland, but in this comparative study we are holding back on any such discussion).

Some further, specific comments need to be made on how the data is reported in this essay (see the following chart). Overall, it should be noted that a score of '1' is high, indicating that this is a major issue, and '3' is low. However, respondents went one of three possible ways in responding to the survey. This will be explained by example.

PS: 3-2.5. This means that a 'place score' method was used, that is, only three items out of the thirteen in the list were chosen, and these were rated 1st, 2nd or 3rd. The '3' indicates that three people identified this as an item of importance, and the 2.5 is the average score. Thus the item was not rated as of a very high significance, since a 3.0 would be the lowest score one could give. But the more important information for a 'PS' rating is how many people marked the item at all.

LS: 8-1.25. A 'level score' is the scoring method in which the respondent rates every item in the list with a 1, 2 or 3 level of importance. Thus a mark of 3 is the lowest score one could give. Here the number of people (8 in the example) is not significant. The average scores among these eight (1.25 in the example) is significant – the issue is a higher than average issue for these respondents.

RS: 7-2.25. By 'rank score' is meant the method of scoring whereby a respondent ranks every item, from 1 to 13 in the case of our list of thirteen moral issues. In this example, seven people would have marked the survey in this way, and their average score is 2.25. Sometimes the range of rank score is also given, since if someone ranks an issue as '1' and someone else ranks it as '13', the average score will hide the fact that there is such a discrepancy.

3. Responses to the 'Moral Issues' Section of the Survey

	<i>Armenia</i>	<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Central Asia</i>	<i>Moldova</i> ²	<i>North Caucasus, Russia</i> ³	<i>Omsk Oblast, Russia</i>	<i>Poland</i> ⁴
Porno-graphy	PS: 2-2.5 LS: 1-2	PS: 2-1 LS: 9-2.44 RS: 1-11 ⁵	PS: 2-1.5 LS: 4-2 RS: 10-7.3	PS: 0-0 LS: 11-2.545 RS: 6-10.66	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-2.55	PS: 0-0 LS: 3-2.33 RS: 4-8.5 ⁶ (range 1 to 11)	M: 0-0 F: 0-0
Homo-sexuality	PS: 2-1 LS: 1-2	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-2.64 RS: 1-13	PS: 0-0 LS: 4-3 RS: 10-8.5	PS: 0-0 LS: 11-2.818 RS: 6-11.5	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-2.66	PS: 0-0 LS: 3-2.33 RS: 3-11.0 (range 8 to 13)	M: 0-0 F: 0-0
Couples living together outside marriage	PS: 2-2 LS: 1-2	PS: 5-2.4 LS: 9-2.22 RS: 3-8, 1, 3	PS: 2-2.5 LS: 4-2 RS: 10-6.8	PS: 0-0 LS: 11-1.817 RS: 6-5.5	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-2.0	PS: 2-2 LS: 3-1.33 RS: 3-5.0 (range: 2 to 7)	M: 1-2 F: 2-2
Pacifism, Military Service	PS: 0-0 LS: 1-3	PS: 1-3 LS: 7-2.14 RS: 1-12	PS: 1-3 LS: 4-2.22 RS: 12-6.58	PS: 0-0 LS: 11-2.272 RS: 6-8.66	PS: 4-2.5 LS: 9-2.11	PS: 5-2 LS: 3-1.33 RS: 4-8.25 (range: 2 to 9)	M: 0-0 F: 0-0
Marital Issues	PS: 6-1.83 LS: 1-1	PS: 3-1.66 LS: 9-1.66 RS: 2-4, 3	PS: 1-3 LS: 4-1 RS: 12-3.75	PS: 1-3 LS: 11-1.636 RS: 6-3.66	PS: 2-1.5 LS: 10-1.5	PS: 9-2.22 LS: 3-1.66 RS: 3-6.0 (range: 1 to 12)	M: 4-2 F: 5-1.8

² Only one respondent ranked only three items. Eleven respondents gave a Level Score to every topic 1, 2 or 3. Six respondents gave a Place Score to the listed items. The average of each of these last two groups is given here. In the last entry for the issue of Refugee work, there were actually four respondents, but one of these did not write clearly on the answer sheet. In any event, the issue is not at the top end of concerns for this group of respondents.

³ One North Caucasus respondent who ranked every item with a 1, 2 or 3 used a value of '0' for the first two items. This would distort the totals if included, and he/she may have understood the value of 0 to signify that the issue was not important rather than it was highly important. Thus the scores for this respondent have been excluded in this report (although the scores are included in our publication).

⁴ Respondents to the questionnaire in Poland were selected so that there was a representation among males (M) and females (F). The two scores for Poland therefore represent not the differences in how the questionnaire was filled out but the differences between men and women, as noted. All the scores are Place Scores. Averages are given for each group.

⁵ The RS scores for Bulgaria are the actual scores of each respondent, not the average scores. This is because only three at most ranked scores (an average could hide information with so small a number of respondents being considered here).

⁶ Averages are less helpful for these respondents, although they are given here. The reason for this is that only four respondents chose to rank each item. Here, in this first topic of 'pornography,' one respondent ranked the item with a priority of '1', whereas another ranked it as a low priority of '11'.

Lifestyle issues (television hair and clothing, etc.)	PS: 13-2 LS: 1-2	PS: 2-2 LS: 8-2 RS: 3-2, 3,	PS: 1-1 LS: 4-1.22 RS: 12-5.17	PS: 3-1.33 LS: 11-1.818 RS: 6-4.0	PS: 2-2.5 LS: 10-1.7	PS: 3-1.33 LS: 3-2.33 RS: 4-8.5 (range: 4 to 10)	M: 3-2.33 F: 1-2
Unity in the church	PS: 7-1.857 LS: 1-1	PS: 10-1.7 LS: 9-1.22 RS: 3-1, 4, 1	PS: 3-1.33 LS: 4-1.22 RS: 12-2.67	PS: 5-1.6 LS: 11-1.272 RS: 6-3.166	PS: 2-1 LS: 10-1.5	PS: 12-1.416 LS: 3-1.33 RS: 3-7.33 (range: 3 to 10)	M: 10-1.7 F: 9-1.55
Speech (gossip, bad language, slander, etc.)	PS: 10-2.1 LS: 1-1	PS: 9-2.11 LS: 9-2 RS: 3-3, 2, 2	PS: 3-2 LS: 4-1.5 RS: 12-3.25	PS: 4-2.5 LS: 11-1.363 RS: 6-3.833	PS: 0-0 LS: 10-1.5	PS: 8-2.474 LS: 3-2 RS: 3-6.0 (range: 1 to 11)	M: 7-1.857 F: 3-2.33
Medical	PS: 1-1 LS: 1-3	PS: 0-0 LS: 10-2.2 RS: 1-10	PS: 0-0 LS: 4-2.75 RS: 12-5.67	PS: 0-0 LS: 11-2.181 RS: 6-8.0	PS: 0-0 LS: 10-2.4	PS: 3-3 LS: 3-2.33 RS: 3-4.66 (range: 2-8)	M: 0-0 F: 1-3
Divorce and Re-marriage	PS: 3-2.66 LS: 1-1	PS: 4-2.75 LS: 9-2.11 RS: 1-9	PS: 0-0 LS: 4-2 RS: 12-9.25	PS: 1-2 LS: 11-1.818 RS: 4-5.0	PS: 1-1 LS: 9-2.11	PS: 5-2.0 LS: 3-1 RS: 4-8.25 (range: 3 to 10)	M: 2-2 F: 0-0
Need to help the poor in the church	PS: 5-2.4 LS: 1-1	PS: 7- LS: 9-1.66 RS: 2-5, 5	PS: 2-3 LS: 4-1 RS: 12-8.67	PS: 1-3 LS: 11-1.727 RS: 4-5.5	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-2.0	PS: 1-1 LS: 3-1.33 RS: 3-3.66 (range: 3 to 4)	M: 0-0 F: 6-2
Need to help the marginalised in society ⁷	PS: 0-0 LS: 1-3	PS: 5-2.6 LS: 7-1.714 RS: 1-6	PS: 0-0 LS: 4-2 RS: 12-10.08	PS: 0-0 LS: 11-1.818 RS: 6-6.0	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-1.88	PS: 4.2.5 LS: 3-1.66 RS: 3-5.66 (range: 2 to 10)	M: 5-2 F: 7-2.128
Refugee and relief Work	PS: 2-2.5 LS: 1-3	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-2.77 RS: 1-7	PS: 1-3 LS: 4-2 RS: 11-11.73	PS: 1-2 LS: 7-2.57 RS: 3-11.66	PS: 0-0 LS: 9-2.11	PS: 0-0 LS: 3-1.66 RS: 2-6 (range: 1 to 11)	M: 2-2.5 F: 0-0

⁷ Ethnic minorities, those from a lower social class, the poor, women, children, etc.

4. Additional Data

Three types of additional data can be reported. The first comes from the hand-written responses to the 'Moral Issues' section of the survey. The second comes from other sections of the same survey where moral issues were also under consideration. A third type of additional data comes from the findings by one of the students of IBTS, Alena Startseva, who used our survey to collect information from Baptists in the Volga region of Russia.

A. Additional Data – Hand-written Responses

The opportunity to hand-write clarifications on the surveys was particularly taken up to clarify 'marital issues'. Here follows all the written responses for 'moral issues' in the survey.

Armenia

For marital issues, one person noted that there is an issue over the age for marriage. Another noted that there are fewer men than women in the church.

Bulgaria

For marital issues, two people wrote in 'premarital relationships'. A few people ranked every topic.

Central Asia

For 'marital issues', one respondent called for more theological reflection on the topic while another noted a need to consider husband and wife relationships. One respondent noted 'abortion' under medical issues. Under 'other', one respondent called for more attention to models for evangelism and mission, also stating that without evangelism the church is dead.

Moldova

For 'marital issues,' the following write-in responses were given: 'communication', 'divorce and remarriage', 'husband and wife roles and responsibilities in the family', 'how to live in marriage with an unbelieving spouse'. Under 'other', one person listed 'work' and another listed 'abortion' as issues with the highest ranking (number 1).

North Caucasus

For 'marital issues', three respondents wrote the following: (1) 'family planning', (2) 'faithfulness, honesty, submission under God's word', (3) 'premarital relationships'. For 'other issues', one respondent wrote 'material blessings' with a high value of '1'.

Omsk Oblast, Russia

Respondents specified several matters under ‘marital concerns’, as follows: ‘preparation for marriage: where and how to find a partner; financial responsibility in the marriage’; ‘premarital counselling’; ‘affect of being minister on the family’; ‘past experience before conversion affects the marriage’; ‘harmony and conflict resolution’; ‘relationship between husband and wife and parents and children’; and two respondents highlighted ‘premarital sexual relationships’. Under the ‘speech’ category, one respondent specified ‘gossip, cynicism, vulgarity, swearing.’

Poland

Under ‘other’, two additions were added: ‘social work broadly understood’ and ‘life of holiness in the church’, each with a value of ‘3’ (low priority).

B. Related Findings from other parts of the same Survey of Baptists in the Same Regions of Europe and Central Asia

Other parts of the survey include questions that might also be considered ethically, such as ‘spiritual life’ or various ‘church issues’. Relevant data from the rest of the survey needs to be considered here as well.

1. Ethical Issue in the ‘Theological Issues’ Section of the Survey: Spiritual Life

First, under a section entitled ‘Theological Issues’, respondents could choose between such topics as doctrine of God, doctrine of Scripture, doctrine of salvation, and so forth. But the questionnaire also included a more ethically related theological issue: ‘Spiritual life (prayer, reading the Bible, fasting, etc.)’. This issue actually turned out to be the primary issue of concern among the other theological issues for Armenia, Bulgaria, North Caucasus and Poland (among both males and females), and the issue also ranks among the top concerns for Moldova, Central Asia and Omsk.

2. Ethical Issues in the ‘Church Issues’ Section of the Survey

Second, another section entitled ‘Church Issues’ included ethics-related issues. The information for the various regions is as follows:

1. The Armenia survey identified the primary concerns among respondents as (a) tithing, offerings, finances; (b) unity in the denomination; (c) unity in the local churches. There was some interest in (d) the issue of women in ministry.
2. Unity in the local churches and the denomination are concerns on the Bulgarian survey.

3. Unity in the local churches is a concern among respondents from Central Asia, Moldova.
4. The North Caucasus responses show some concern here for (a) unity in general, but a much more pressing concern seems to be (b) tithing, offerings, and finances.
5. The same two issues ((a) unity in the church, (b) tithing, offerings and finances) are present among the respondents from Omsk, although the emphasis is the opposite and the concern for unity is primarily unity within the local churches.
6. The respondents from Poland rated other church issues above any moral issues, although there was some slight concern over unity noted for this question.

3. Top Category of Issues Facing the Church

Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of various groupings of issues – theology, morality, church, church and state/society, theological education, and leadership issues. Respondents who chose ‘moral issues’ above all the categories came from Bulgaria and Poland. Those who chose ‘moral issues’ as a second concern came from Armenia. Omsk, Moldova, and the North Caucasus regions chose this topic as third among the others. The topic was rated fourth on the list by the respondents from Central Asia.

4. Overall Issues Facing the Church

Respondents were also given the opportunity to note the top five issues from all the categories combined on the survey. More than moral issues were involved, but only the moral issues are being reported in this essay. This question always received a great variety of responses, thus keeping the numbers low for any one issue.

‘Unity in the churches’ received the most checks for the respondents from Armenia. Omsk respondents noted ‘unity of the church’ and ‘tithing, offerings and finances’ as the top ethical issues. ‘Use of power by leaders’ came next, followed by marital issues (three respondents), and then, noted by two respondents, paying taxes, lifestyle issues, spiritual issues, unity in the local church, and divorce and remarriage. Other ethical issues received only one vote. If the two unity options are combined, this issue stands out above all the rest with seven respondents noting the concern.

The North Caucasus respondents gave the following order to moral issues for this question: spiritual life (prayer, reading the Bible, fasting, etc.) (5 respondents), marital issues (4 respondents), need for training in relief work (4 respondents), the church’s involvement in society (to meet

needs, be involved in politics and shape society at large, etc.) (3 respondents), lifestyle issues (television, hair and clothing, etc.) (2 respondents), and unity in the church (2 respondents).

Respondents in Moldova did not highlight moral issues or did not have sufficient numbers for useful discussion on this question, except that the second highest issue with four respondents checking the item was 'unity in the local churches'.

On the Bulgarian responses, the highest ethics-related concern was spiritual life (5 respondents), followed by the need to help the poor (3 respondents) and marital issues (2 respondents). A related question on the questionnaire gave respondents the opportunity to write in their own top issue overall. This typically ended up with too few respondents choosing the same item for us to comment on the responses. But on the Bulgaria survey, five respondents put spiritual life as the major issue. In Central Asia, 'unity in the local churches' received four responses and 'unity in the church' received two.

Respondents from Poland marked 'marital issues' the second highest issue on the questionnaire, with 'unity of the church' and 'unity of the local churches' lower down (but if the two are combined, they would be ranked just above marital issues).

5. Leadership Issues

One of the topics respondents from Armenia, Bulgaria, Omsk and Poland could identify as an issue under 'leadership issues' was the use of power among leaders. This may be related to concerns about church unity where both issues are noted on the surveys.

6. Church and Culture

Another question produced uncertain results which must be considered cautiously. H. Richard Niebuhr's book, *Christ and Culture*,⁸ proposes five ways in which the church might relate to society or culture at large: radical separation ('Christ against culture'), subsumed by culture ('Christ of culture'), separation of private and public spheres ('Christ and culture in paradox'), guiding culture from a position of social power ('Christ above culture'), and transforming culture as an alternative social witness and prophetic voice ('Christ transforming culture'). We do not particularly find these categories clear in themselves, and we do not think that the believers' church (baptistic, gathered church) option is at all well represented by

⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).

Niebuhr, who saw Anabaptist communities as ‘Christ against culture’ communities. But we thought we would try his categories out on respondents. The results obtained suggest some uncertainty over the distinction between certain categories, since respondents often typified their rather small baptistic groups in a variety of ways. That said, using Niebuhr’s short-hand terms for the five options, the results can be reported as follows:

	Armenia	Bulgaria	Central Asia	Moldova	Omsk	Poland
Against		Baptists, Catholics	Catholics	Baptists	Baptists, Catholics	Baptists, Protestants
Paradox	Baptists	Baptists, Catholics	Baptists		Baptists	Baptists
Trans- forming			Baptists	Baptists	Baptists, Orthodox	Catholic
Above		Orthodox	Orthodox	Orthodox	Orthodox	Catholic
Of	Armenian Apostolic Church	Orthodox	Baptists	Orthodox		Catholic, Baptists

The results for the North Caucasus region were not written up, since there seemed to be confusion on the part of the respondents regarding this question. Respondents from Poland added ‘Protestants’ as a category.

The responses seem to indicate the awkwardness of Niebuhr’s categories, although a defendant of Niebuhr might argue that a lesson on his categories might have been needed before the responses were solicited. One might further suggest that the actual terms used in the survey allowed for this array of responses, where the same church group is seen to occupy several different options at the same time. It is our belief, though, that Niebuhr’s work is rather seriously flawed, despite all the attention it still gets in classes on ethics.

One can see that the dominant group in a society typically occupies the last two options, as expected. Where Baptists are placed in the ‘Christ of Culture’ option, people may be reflecting a conviction that too much of culture has seeped into the churches.

As to the other categories, one can see why Baptists might be considered against culture, since they are in the minority and not trying to be like the rest of society. It is surprising, though, that this was not the view expressed by respondents from Central Asia.

Baptists are also, in the view of Central Asian, Moldovan and Omsk respondents, as trying to transform society. And, in the view of five regions (excluding Moldova in the chart), Baptists also address different matters

from the culture. Whereas Niebuhr saw this as the position occupied by Lutherans in the history of the Church, one can see why a minority church might also see itself in this way: it is forced to see itself as addressing spiritual matters since it is excluded from playing a part in society at large. These responses may speak both to the inadequacy of Niebuhr's categories and to a perspective churches actually entertain in these regions – a point worth exploring further.

7. Ways to Transform Society

A final ethical question addressed how the church might seek to transform society. The choices were (1) personal evangelism; (2) prayer for people and society, events, leaders, etc.; (3) Church events (church meetings for the public, music festivals, cultural events, etc.); (4) helping the needy; (5) involvement in shaping government, policies, laws, politics; (6) protests, civil disobedience; and (7) 'other'. The question can be viewed from the perspective of how actively engaged the church expects, for one reason or another, to be engaged with the surrounding culture, and it particularly gives an opportunity for people to note how significant helping the needy might be in the engagement of culture. Thus the responses also speak to the ethical interests and issues facing the churches in these regions.

Typically, respondents from the different regions saw evangelism and prayer as the main ways in which to transform society rather than more actively encountering culture or helping the needy. The prioritising of the ways in which to transform society tended to be in the order that the options were offered on the questionnaire, with evangelism as the first way to do so, and so forth. But the responses to 'helping the needy' are not insignificant for all the regions reporting. After this option, however, the responses fell dramatically, and that is undoubtedly (though not necessarily only) because of the contextual realities that face these minority churches.

C. Related Findings from the use of the Survey for Baptists in the Volga Region of Russia

In addition to these studies, we can also offer the 2005 study by Alena Startseva on the Volga region of Russia.⁹ Startseva used the same questionnaire in her study, but she only presents data on the first five moral issues rather than reports on every issue. Her findings are as follows, with the first number representing the number of respondents for this item and

⁹ This material comes from an unpublished essay for a Contextual Missiology class at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague.

the second item representing the average value given to the item (on the scale of 1 as highest concern and 3 as lowest).

unity in the church	11-1.454
marital issues	10-1.9
lifestyle issues (television, hair and clothing, etc.)	4-2.5
need to help the poor in the church	3-2.66
divorce and remarriage	3-2.66

This data shows that the top two items that people highlight are, once again, the unity of the church and marital issues. Also, the average value given affirms that these are significant issues above the rest.

5. Initial Observations on the Data

Pornography

No region sees pornography as a major issue in comparison to other moral issues. Some see this as an issue, but overall (with just a few individual exceptions) on the average to lower than average range.

Homosexuality

Of the issues listed, this is at the lowest level of significance for the churches reporting from these regions in this survey. It ranks lowest with 'Relief and Refugee' work (sometimes a little higher, sometimes a little lower).

Couples Living Together Outside of Marriage

This issue ranges from average to higher than average in significance. Omsk reports the highest concern over this issue, followed by Moldova, both regions seeing the issue as above average in importance. Some concern is also registered by respondents from Bulgaria – see especially the number of respondents offering a PS score, as well as the RS scores.

Pacifism, Military Service

Omsk Oblast, North Caucasus and Central Asia show some concern over this issue, in the order listed.

Marital Issues

This is a major issue for all regions reporting, second only to unity in the church and perhaps tying with the issue of speech for place of significance (there are some variations between countries on which is of greater significance). It is also the issue that received several hand-written clarifications (see below).

Lifestyle Issues (television, hair, clothes)

Two regions report this as a significant issue: Central Asia and Moldova.

Unity in the Church

Every region highlights this as the most important moral issue facing the church.

Speech (gossip, bad language, slander)

Issues of speech are also highly important moral issues in the churches in the regions reporting in these surveys. This issue falls very close to unity in the church in importance and marital issues.

Medical Issues

This issue figures as average to below average. Perhaps the questionnaire was too vague at this point. Issues here might be medical procedures (e.g., abortion), medical costs, corruption, the government's responsibility to provide good health care to all citizens, specific care (e.g., for the elderly), medical research, and so forth.

Divorce and Remarriage

This issue gets some attention in the various regions. It is most significant for respondents from Moldova.

Need to help the poor in the church

This is reported as an issue of more than average concern in every region except the North Caucasus. The region that sees this as quite a significant issue is Bulgaria.

Need to help the marginalised in society (ethnic minorities, those from a lower social class, the poor, women, children, etc)

Only respondents from Armenia did not list this as an important issue. Other regions saw the issue as more than average in importance, with Poland's respondents seeing this as the most important issue on the survey after unity in the church and issues of speech. It was also an important issue for Omsk Oblast.

Refugee and Relief Work

Only Omsk Oblast saw this as an issue of more than average significance.

6. Interpretation of the Data

The surveys were taken with a desire to stimulate pertinent theological and ministerial discussion in the region as well as to give a voice to regions not always heard in discussions outside the areas. They were not undertaken to offer definitive descriptions of the churches of a certain area. This data

could easily be misused, and it needs further clarification through discussion with those working in the region as well as through other means of gaining insight into the realities of the region. We have begun to do this and can here report two further pieces of research that help us to interpret the above data.

First, Alena Startseva not only used the survey to collect similar data from the Volga region of Russia but also knows the region and has interviewed ministers there. This sheds light on several reasons for the concern over church unity that is uniquely contextual, although it might explain the concern for all the regions reported in this study. A second qualitative study interacting with data from the survey involves comments by International Baptist Theological Seminary students and faculty. Many come from or are aware of issues in these regions, and they offered their thoughts in a workshop in February 2006 that presented the above data.

A. Insights from the Volga Region of Russia on the Concern for Church Unity

In her research, Alena Startseva focuses on the concern over church unity in the Volga region of Russia. Young missionaries from other countries and with new ideas about church and worship are at odds with the more traditional churches of the region. In consultation with others, she explains the discord in the churches as follows:¹⁰

1. *Discipline*: ‘A serious problem has resulted which has caused conflict among the churches. It is the problem of church discipline. In the old, long-standing Baptist churches, excessively strict measures have been long accepted, but in the newer mission churches, eyes have been closed to sin.’
2. *Fitting new believers into the church*: A failure to disciple new believers in the churches has led to conflict between long-standing believers and those who more recently entered the church.
3. *Financial strains*: Expanding churches needed more room to meet, but in difficult economic times there was little money to pay higher rental bills. At the same time, mission-established churches had recourse to funds from elsewhere, and missionaries, who had some money, needed to use the funds for their own needs (rent, transportation, etc.). Financial resources and the use of funds thus led to strained relationships within the churches.

¹⁰ The presentation of her list here captures the content in a slightly different enumeration of the issues.

4. *The role of training in new missionary churches*: A problem developed as young leaders in the new missionary outreaches and churches were more open on various issues than the more established, traditional churches. The pulpit was not protected by the minister in the new missionary churches, but all interested in participating in the service were encouraged to do so.
5. *Women's ministerial roles*: The new mission churches gave more freedom to women to minister than had been acceptable in the older churches.
6. *Form of worship*: The new missionary churches used contemporary music, over against the style of worship in traditional churches.

B. Further Thoughts on the Issue of Church Unity

In addition to these comments by Alena Startseva, it should be noted that the unity of the church is a major issue for the Orthodox Church, which has a major presence in all the countries surveyed here except Poland. Orthodoxy interprets its primary mission as that of seeking the restoration of unity after the Catholic and Orthodox split in 1054.

Another contextual reason was offered in our study of Poland, where the possibility that major political disunity in the country at the time of the survey might have fuelled concern for unity in the churches. The fact that the issue is raised throughout the region suggests that such a contextual reason in one country might not be the real issue after all.

Also, the unity of the Church might – and this is speculative – be an issue of concern for minority churches, which all the churches in the survey are. Such churches are sometimes, wrongly, considered sects by the majority churches (Orthodox or Catholic) in these regions.

A fourth reason for a concern for unity might be the fact that, under Communism, various protestant churches were forced to work within one body if they were to register with the governments. Since the demise of Communist regimes from 1989, these forced unions have often dissolved. If by ‘church unity’ one means not local church unity but larger groups, such as Baptists and Pentecostals, then this might be the issue in mind.

Related to this is the disunity among baptistic churches under Communism over the issue of registration and non-registration. This created disunity among otherwise fairly like-minded groups that in some regions remains an issue.

The survey itself at times points to problems with speech or leadership in the local church or Baptist fellowship that would contribute to disunity. As noted above, several countries identified the use of power among leaders as an issue deserving some attention (Armenia, Bulgaria, Omsk and Poland).

There are many possible reasons for disunity. Some may well apply to every region, but every context will need to be explored to see if there are also unique issues the churches are facing. There may be perennial issues of unity facing these churches, ones even facing the first churches of the first century (e.g., Corinth and Philippi). Indeed, one point noted in one of our dissertations was that the major moral concern amongst all the others that Paul addresses among his churches was disunity.¹¹

C. Comments on Moral Issues by those from or working in Central and Eastern Europe

Students and faculty at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, many of whom are from and/or minister in Baptist churches in the former Soviet bloc, were asked in a workshop in which the results in this essay were reported (15 February, 2006) to discuss the findings. There was insufficient time to explore all the questions that arise from the data, questions such as those listed in the chart, below. But some of the issues were explored in the workshop, and the responses are recorded after the chart of questions on two moral issues in the survey: pornography and marital issues. Questions such as the following could be posed to those ministering in each of the regions under review.

Chart of Questions arising from the Survey on each Moral Issue

Pornography	Since pornography is rife in Europe, why is this a below-average concern on our survey? Is it because it is not as important as other issues in our list, because it is not a problem in the churches, or because pornography is itself not considered to be much of a moral issue?
Homosexuality	Only a few individuals highlighted this as an issue of concern, and this could be because they are reading about the issue from Western Europe and the USA. Is this an issue to address in these contexts? Is it an issue for the churches?
Couples living together outside of Marriage	This issue received a little attention from our surveys. What are the reasons that couples live together outside of marriage in these regions? How do the churches address this issue when such couples come into the churches? Is this also an issue for people who grew up in the church?

¹¹ Rollin G. Grams, 'Gospel and Mission in Paul's Ethics', unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1989).

Pacifism, Military Service	All respondents are from minority Christian communities in these regions. The issue of military service arises for some people on the survey, although it does not feature as one of the major issues. Why is this not a greater problem facing the churches today? Is there an alternative to military service in the regions? Are churches pacifist?
Marital issues	This was one of the major issues facing Christians, according to our survey. Are there any additional concerns beyond those listed by respondents to the survey? Is divorce on the rise in the churches (if so, by how much)? What are the reasons for divorce in the churches? What view do churches take on remarriage after divorce?
Lifestyle issues (television, hair clothing, etc.)	What are the real issues regarding Christian lifestyle in the regions? Are there differences between various regions, churches, ages and so forth on these (if so, state what these are)?
Unity in the church	This is the major issue throughout the regions surveyed – a rather large area. What are the real issues? Is disunity a uniquely Baptist problem in these regions? How could there be greater unity among churches?
Speech (gossip, bad language, slander, etc.)	The significance given to this issue suggests that it is a contributing factor to disunity in the local congregation, as it was in Paul's churches. Can you clarify what the problems are? What might be done to address the issue?
Medical issues	This did not feature as a major issue, perhaps because of the way the matter was left unexplained. Are there medical issues of significance facing Christians in the region, such as medical procedures, medical care (care for the elderly, etc.), medical research, medical insurance, corruption in medical practice, etc.?
Divorce and Remarriage	This seems to be a concern in the churches and one that is on the rise. Is this a matter of how to address the issue for new believers with past divorces, or is this a matter affecting Christian marriages? What are the reasons for divorce and remarriage? What are the attitudes in the churches towards divorce and remarriage? How can the church be positively involved in troubled marriages?
Need to help the poor in the church	This issue had different responses in different regions. Are people poor in the churches in these regions? Are there differences within the churches between those who are wealthy (or have more) and those who are not? Do the churches help the poor in ways that stand out in the context? Does care of the needy stand out as an attraction to those outside the church?
Need to help the marginalised in society¹²	Is the church itself marginalised in society? Does it reach out to the marginalised? Is there a difference in practice between Baptist and other Churches on this matter? Do women feel 'marginalised' in their roles in the Churches?
Refugee and relief work	Is there any need for work among refugees in the regions surveyed? What would happen or happens if the churches work among these people? Do churches get involved in relief work among refugees, the homeless, when there is a natural disaster, etc.?

¹² Ethnic minorities, those from a lower social class, the poor, women, children, etc.

Responses from the IBTS Workshop

The results of the surveys for moral issues were presented to a gathering of the faculty and post-graduate students at the International Baptist Theological Seminary. People involved in ministry and theological studies from the following countries made up the group: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Israel, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Two issues from the survey were explored. One was an issue that did not appear as very significant for the churches in the regions surveyed but which seems to be an important issue in the regions – pornography. The question was asked why the issue gets so little attention from the respondents on our survey. The second issue addressed is that of ‘marital issues’, a topic that was second only to the unity of the church and which received the most hand-written comments from the respondents.

Pornography

Various interesting comments were voiced among our group discussing the issue of pornography and the churches in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

First, some suggestions should be ruled out:

*One person asked whether the age group was older so that pornography was not so much an issue, but this assumes that older people (men, mostly) do not struggle with this as well. Nevertheless, the respondents were often in their twenties and even late teens.

*Another person wondered whether being limited to choosing the top three issues could account for this topic not appearing to be so important to the respondents. However, most respondents did not fill out the surveys in this way, choosing to rank every item in one way or another (except the group from Poland).

*Perhaps ‘pornography’ is not understood in quite the same way in Europe as it is, say, in the USA. Nudity is more accepted in Europe: it is more a matter of freedom than pornography. However, the general feeling of the group was that pornography is an issue in the countries surveyed.

If one grants that pornography is an issue in these countries, why it does not score high for respondents looking at moral issues in the church must be explained in some other way or ways. Some suggestions from our IBTS group follow:

*Although the issue may be significant for the region, if it is not an issue for the churches it will not be noted as such by the respondents. It has to

‘become’ an issue through something happening that captures the attention of the churches. Pornography is clearly seen by these churches as wrong, and so it is not an ‘issue’ that the churches are having to address.

*Related to this, one person ventured the thought that a low interest in this subject may be the result of suppressing such thoughts in discussion. Another noted the experience of a student from Estonia who wrote a paper on homosexuality. He then had to defend himself to some in the church who questioned whether he was having trouble in this area of his life. To talk about an issue might imply that one is struggling with the issue oneself.

*Perhaps related to the previous suggestion is the idea that, until a scandal erupts around an issue that the churches feel is wrong, the issue will not be considered as significant. A number of people in the churches may well be struggling with the issue.

*While some stated that the issue of pornography was considered in these regions to be wrong, the suggestion was made that perhaps there were different views on the matter. Baptists in Latvia, for example, have recently found disagreement among themselves over how to respond to a homosexual parade in the country.

*On the other hand, differences among Baptists in the regions may not be so much over whether the issue is sinful but how to respond to it. One respondent noted that for downloading pornography from the internet someone in the USA might be removed from ministry, but this was not likely to happen in Eastern Europe.

*Someone from Poland noted that an issue such as pornography or abortion would be considered as a major issue among Catholics, since so many Poles are Catholic. But in the small Baptist communities, which are not made up of many loosely affiliated people from the country at large, believers would not likely see themselves as having to face such sins.

*Such issues are issues in the Baptist churches – even homosexuality is an issue for some. But Christians do not know how to help people with such struggles with sin. The churches are not yet addressing the issue of pornography even though the problem is there.

Yet it may be that, in fact, the issue is not a major issue after all. A pastor from the Czech Republic stated that the issue of pornography is not a major issue yet. Most of the communities live closely in small towns and villages. People know each other well and watch over each other’s behaviour.

Someone from Croatia gave an interesting anecdote. A church in the country regularly attends a ‘queer festival’ in order to protest against it. It is motivated to do so in part because it had a minister who abused a boy

sexually for some time. Leaders of the festival have invited the church to participate regularly in their event since they have been so faithful in attendance over the past three years.

Marital Issues

A variety of thoughts were expressed under the wide topic of ‘marital issues’ in the comments from respondents to the questionnaire as well as from the group gathered at IBTS.

*In Russia, people who divorce or sin in some way are excluded from the church and, in this way, the issue ceases to be an issue in the church.

*One person, who knows Russia well, said that couples living together is not a church issue since Christians do not do this. But a Russian responded that there have been examples of couples from the church living together. However, they invariably leave the church.

*Someone from Poland said that people do not talk about Christians living together outside of marriage because this is simply not acceptable or practised. However, divorce is becoming an issue and the churches are having to address it, a point also made by someone else from Poland.

*A case from Lithuania demonstrates that sexual and marital issues are important to believers. Meetings for youth were poorly attended until such topics were announced for the gatherings.

*Someone from Moldova stated that, despite the results of the survey for Moldova, divorce and remarriage is not an issue there for Christians. This comment reminds us how the data in these surveys needs to be explored further rather than taken as accurate evidence describing the identity of churches in the regions covered.

*A sociology of religion researcher commented in the group that a study in Hungary has shown that twice as many people say that their work colleagues have committed adultery than the number of people who admit to being adulterers. Thus what one is willing to say is an issue might not be the same as what really the issue is.

*A Czech student and pastor noted that many in his denomination are now looking into the causes of divorce, pornography and other matters.

7. Conclusion

This essay presents the first quantitative study plus an initial qualitative collection of data on moral issues for Baptists in six regions of Central and Eastern Europe and in the region of Central Asia.

The study suggests that there are contextual differences over why an issue is considered above average in a certain region. Even when all the regions agree on what the major moral issue is facing the church today, regional differences must still be taken into account. And there are differences within a region regarding some of the issues, where one person considers an issue to be very important and another does not.

That said, our survey of moral issues for Baptist churches in these regions show some remarkable agreement that unity of the churches is a major moral issue of our day. Again, there may be a number of reasons for this and the reasons may differ from region to region, but the issue stands out remarkably as a major concern for Baptists in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The qualitative analysis of this issue in this essay has offered a number of interesting contextual reasons for why unity in the churches is a major concern.

Similarly, marital issues are a major concern across the regions, even if what is meant by this covers various topics. Some of these are surprising, as our survey already noted, such as the concern about when young people should marry. Several respondents specified that divorce and remarriage was an issue, while other respondents noted issues not so much to do with the institution of marriage but about family life.

Other issues were also noted, as the data in the first chart shows. The next step in this research might be to take these results to the regions and explore questions such as those listed in the second chart on each moral issue. But another method of gaining information about moral issues in these regions is to collect case studies illustrating the issues, which is the direction of our own current research on ethics in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We hope that the publication of this data will stimulate other research on ethics in these regions.

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